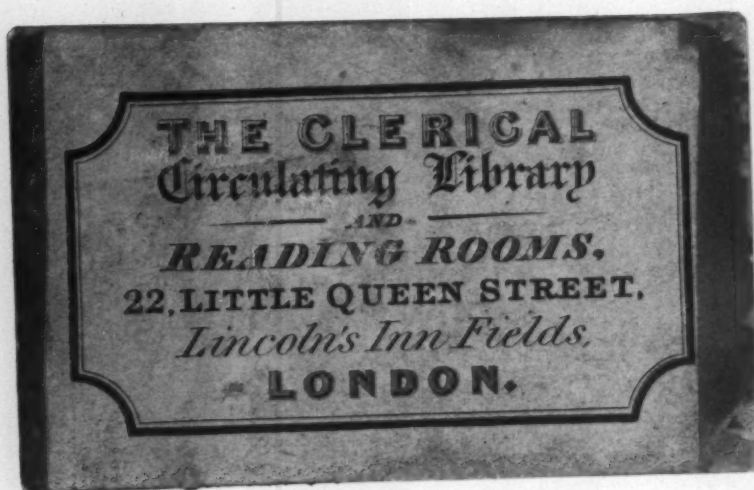




45. C. 1

Call

4455 a a. 6

by R. H. Hon. E. W. Weston

K

D

By

Jac
bi
ro

A

44 55 aab
K. Family Discourses.

F A M I L Y
D I S C O U R S E S.

By a COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

Jacob said to his Household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange Gods that are among You, and be clean.

GEN. XXXV. 2.

L O N D O N :

Printed for the A U T H O R :

And Sold by W I L L I A M J O H N S T O N,
in Ludgate Street.

M D C C L X V I I I .



R

L

shi

TO THE
RIGHT REVEREND
AND
HONOURABLE
RICHARD TREVOR,
LORD BISHOP of DURHAM.

MY LORD,

THE Author of these Discourses is induced to inscribe Them to your Lordship, not only by his Obligations to
that

DEDICATION,

that constant Regard, and Friendship, with which You have honoured Him through all the Inequalities of Life; but from a long Acquaintance also with your steady zealous Attachment to the Interests of Morality and Religion.

They were written for the Use of a Private Family, in the View of disposing the Members of It to a serious Consideration of the Duties of our Present State, and the Hopes, and Fears of Futurity.

If They may, by God's Blessing, have that Effect upon the Minds of any other Family, or of any one Person whatsoever, who may want such

DEDICATION.

such an Incitement; the End of their Publication will be so far answered.

The Design therefore cannot fail of your Approbation: But the Execution may.

For this Reason, to exempt You from the disagreeable Dilemma of either mortifying One, whom you would choose to oblige, by a Refusal of his Present; or allowing your Name to be prefixed to what you might think, in any Respect, objectionable; The Writer has determined to publish to the World this Mark of his affectionate Respect to your Person, and Reverence

DEDICATION.

rence of your Virtues, without any previous Communication either of the Book itself, or his Design of dedicating it to you.

28 SE60.

DIS-

D

Choose

As

the

T

Nation

Name

fame)

and w

Him,

in the

several

in all

turned

DISCOURSE I.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15:

*Choose you this Day whom you will serve.
As for me, and my House, we will serve
the Lord.*

THIS is spoken by Joshua the great General of the Jews, and Conqueror of many Gentile Nations: By Him, who bore the same Name (for Joshua and Jesus are the same) with our ever-blessed Saviour; and was a Fore-runner and Type of Him, in that He performed those things in the Land of Canaan, which Christ was, several hundred Years after to perform in all Lands. I mean that He overturned and destroyed the Kingdom of

4 DISCOURSE I.

Satan in those Countries, where Dead Men, and Images of Wood, and Stone, and even Devils were prayed to; and introduced, in their Stead, the Worship of the one True, Almighty, Everlasting God.

This great and good Man, having had full Experience of the Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness of Jehovah, the Protector of Israel; and of the Inability of the Heathen Deities to defend either their Worshippers, or Themselves; after relating to the People under his Government the mighty and wonderful Things, which had been done for them by the Lord of Hosts, who had just put them into Possession of the Land promised to their Fathers; demands of Them (as it is implied in the Words of the Text) *What God they would*, for the future *serve*; whether the Dumb Idols
of

DISCOURSE I. 5

of the Gentiles, the Work of Men's Hands, or the Creator of Heaven, and Earth; whether the weak and vanquished Deities of Canaan, or the omnipotent God of Jacob.

He declares his own fixed Resolution to serve the Lord with his Family. He gives the Reasons of his Resolution, and supports his Opinion by the strongest Arguments; but forces no Man to come into it: He treats his Hearers as Reasonable Creatures, puts no Violence upon their Consciences, but leaves their Religion to their own Choice; resembling, in That Circumstance too, the great Author of Our's.

You may perhaps wonder that it should seem necessary to Joshua to hold this Language to the Children of Israel; A People, whom God had so lately delivered from the Slavery of Egypt;

6 DISCOURSE I.

whom He had miraculously conducted through the Red Sea, and through all the Terrors, and Distresses of a vast barren Wilderness; to whom he had just given the Country of their Enemies to inhabit, *A Land flowing with Milk, and Honey*, to Them, and their Children after Them; *A Land, for which They did not labour; Cities, which They built not; Vineyards, and Olive Yards, which They planted not*: They knew too that their Fathers had perished in the Desert through the just Judgment of God upon their Obstinacy, and Ingratitude: These their Sons had been born, and lived to that Day, in the Midst of the Mercies of God, and still rebelled against Him; for They had not yet put away the strange Gods, which their Fathers served in Egypt, as you may read in the 14th and 23d Verses. And
indeed

DISCOURSE I. 7

indeed this People of the Jews is represented in holy Scripture, as a *stiff-necked*, that is, a self-willed, and perverse Generation; ever prone to Idolatry; insensible to the Blessings; murmuring against the Commandments; and hardened against the Threatenings of their Lord, and Saviour.

As Joshua was therefore ready to be taken from Them by Death, and was well acquainted with their Disposition to forsake Jehovah, and serve other Gods, He thought it his Duty to draw from Them, before his Departure, a positive Declaration of their Intentions with respect to that most important Question, What Religion They would embrace, and adhere to; and by his own Resolution and Example to induce them to make the right Choice. “ Choose you,
 “ says He, this Day, if it seem Evil to
 A 4 “ you

8 DISCOURSE I.

“ you to serve the Lord, Whom Ye
 “ will serve : Whether the Gods, whom
 “ your Fathers served, or the Gods of
 “ the Amorites in whose Land you
 “ dwell.”

What therefore was their Choice?
 Why such an one, at that time, as might
 be expected from a highly favoured and
 more grateful People. They declare
 that They will serve no other God, but
 Him, *who brought Them out of the Land
 of Egypt, and House of Bondage, and
 which did those great Things in their Sight.*
 And we read that they kept their good
 Resolution “ *all the days of Joshua, and*
 “ *of the Elders, who outlived Joshua.*”
 But alas ! Those who are acquainted
 with Scripture History, with which we
 ought all to be acquainted, know, how
 sadly They afterwards fell off ; how They
 sold Themselves to commit Idolatry, and
 all

DISCOURSE I. 9

all Wickedness in the Sight of God; and the terrible Vengeance, which attended their Rebellion against Him.

Let Us now see, since We are assured by St. Paul, that all Scripture was written for our Instruction, what Application We may make to Ourselves, and what useful Lesson We may learn from that Portion of it, which is the Object of our present Attention. And in order to this, I would recommend to you the two following Considerations: First, how far our Case may resemble their's, in having a like Choice to make, *Whom we will serve.* 2dly, Whether the Choice, which they, in Imitation of their great Leader, made, that *they would serve the Lord*, be worthy of our Imitation also.

And First, With respect to the Choice to be made. It is true that the Cases
are

10 DISCOURSE I.

are not exactly alike: And We may bless God that they are not so. We may indeed, and ought to praise his holy Name, that We were born in the pure Air of Reformed Christianity; trained up from our Infancy in the Worship of the only true God, and Him, whom he hath sent; and in an Abhorrence both of Pagan, and Popish Idolatry. But though we have neither the Temptation, nor Opportunity of falling down before Graven Images, and adoring the Work of our own Hands, as the Children of Israel did; There is yet another Kind of Idolatry, of which We too may be guilty, and other False Gods, whose Service We may, and which Many do prefer to That of our Almighty Creator.

We read in Scripture that *Covetousness is Idolatry*: We read too of some People,

DISCOURSE I. 11

ple, whose *God is their Belly*. Now, for the same Reason, that the Apostle stiles Covetousness Idolatry, all other Vices, to which Men yield their Affections in Preference to the Law of God, may be justly called by the same odious Name: For God requireth the Heart, and if We dedicate it to any other Master, it is setting up an Idol in our Hearts against him. In like manner, if We enslave Ourselves to Gluttony, or Drunkenness, Our Belly then becomes the Object of our Worship: Or, if Pride, Ambition, Revenge, Dishonesty, or any Carnal Lust, has got Possession of our Souls, to the Exclusion of Religion, and Virtue, We may then be truly said to have chosen that favourite Passion, whatever it be, for our God.

Thus you see plainly that if, (to use the Words of Joshua to the Israelites,) It should

12 DISCOURSE I.

should seem Evil to us to serve the Lord ; as They had the Choice of the Gods of Egypt, or Gods of the Amorites, whom They might worship, so we also have Gods many, and Lords many, even every Vitious Appetite of our Hearts, ready to receive our Adoration, from the Moment We cease to be the Servants of the Living God.

But there is still Another, and That a capital Object of Idolatrous Worship, mentioned in Scripture, The great Adversary of God and Man, the Devil ; who is named by our Saviour *the Prince*, and by St. Paul *the God* of this World. Him too it is in our Power to serve : And it is to Him, in Truth, that We transfer our Allegiance, and Duty, when We forsake the Service of our Maker, and Redeemer. Those sinful Lusts, which get the Dominion over Us, are
but

but
Mini
Rich
fures
Eyes
Obed
which
Sover
Wick
Altar
whom
Sin
as mu
as it v
of Go
will se
Decla
Case,
God o
of our
examin

DISCOURSE I. 13

but inferior, and subordinate Deities, Ministers of his Kingdom. When the Riches, or Power, or Glory, or Pleasures of this World have blinded our Eyes, and withdrawn Us from that Obedience, and Zeal, and Gratitude, which We owe to our true Master and Sovereign: It is He, that Father of all Wickedness, and Falshood, at whose Altar, We sacrifice: It is He, before whom We fall down and worship.

Since it is therefore evident that it is as much in the Option of Us Christians, as it was in That of the antient People of God, to determine what Deity We will serve; and since We have seen the Declaration made by Them in the like Case, viz. That They would serve the God of their Father's, who is the God of our Fathers also, and of Us; Let us examine, in the second Place, whether their

14 DISCOURSE I.

their Choice be worthy of our Imitation.

And, whereas the great, and constant Object of all our Wishes, and all our Endeavors, is Happiness: It seems sufficient, for determining that Point, if We can discover, on which side of it our truest Happiness lies, *Present*, and *Future*. I say *Present*, and *Future*, for, in order to form a right Judgment of this Matter, we ought to take them together: Not to confine our Reflexions to the Condition of Man in this transitory Life, but to consider Him in his whole Existence; as Mortal Here, but Immortal Hereafter. It is true, that many plausible Things may be said to shew, that, from a due Sense of the Dignity of Human Nature; from the natural Deformity of Vice, and Beauty of Holiness; a Man ought to prefer the
Latter

DISCOURSE I. 15

Latter to the Former, even though there were Nothing to hope, or to fear beyond our Continuance in this World. But it is an Argument hard to be supported, and not like to make many Converts, in those Cases especially, where the certain Consequences of Vice may be Pleasure, and of Virtue Suffering. Let Us therefore take Things as They are, considering Ourselves as placed here by our gracious Creator upon our Tryal for a blessed Eternity, and accountable to Him for our Obedience, or Disobedience to his Commands. In this View, our Present, and Future State become inseparable, since all our Words, Thoughts, and Actions Here, have so evident a Connexion with an Hereafter. And, That being our real Case, can there be any possible doubt on which Side our truest Interest lies; Whether in serving God,
or

16 DISCOURSE I.

or Mammon; in labouring with all the Powers of our Mind to deserve the Love and Favour of our Father which is in Heaven, or in exposing Ourselves to his dreadful Indignation?

It must indeed be acknowledged, that the Paths of Religion and Virtue are sometimes rugged, and difficult; and that He, who is resolved to adhere, at all Events, to his Duty, and to keep his Conscience void of Offence, may be exercised with very severe, as well as very flattering Temptations. But He knows that his Perseverance will have its Reward, and enjoys the Foretaste of it, even in the midst of Bodily Sufferings, and Self-Denials. Whereas on the contrary, the very Prosperities of the Wicked are full of uneasy Reflexions: Momentary Enjoyments mixed with Anxiety, and over-ballanced, as well as imbitter-

ed,

DISCOURSE I. 17

ed, by the Apprehension of Painful Consequences, Temporal, and Eternal. His outside Appearance may be all Gaiety and Joy: But his retired Thoughts will disturb his Rest. In the Presence of his Dissolute Companions, He carries the Face of Happiness: But his Solitude is miserable. We have it from the Mouth of the Lord Himself, by his Prophet Isaiah, that “ There is no Peace to the “ Wicked:” And certainly there can be no solid Satisfaction in rebelling against our Maker, Benefactor, and Judge; Nor indeed any Satisfaction at all, till the Conscience of the abandoned Sinner is hardened by a long Practice of Wickedness, and becomes the more dangerously liable to God’s Displeasure, in Proportion as He apprehends it less. A State of Mind, which surely No thinking Man would envy. Such is the Condi-

B

tion,

18 DISCOURSE I.

tion, and Such, as I have here represented Them, are the Wages of the Servants of Sin in this World. What They may be in the next, God grant that We may, None of Us, ever experience.

But let Us turn our Eyes to a more pleasing Picture, and more chearful Prospect. Let us view the true Servant and Worshipper of God, reaping the first Fruits of his Virtue; enjoying the inestimable Delights of a good and quiet Conscience; happy in the Blessings of the Poor, in the Esteem of all good Men, but above all in the Approbation of his most just and merciful Master. Compare now this sincerely Religious Man with the Wretch, who has preferred the Indulgence of his sinful Lusts to the Service of his God, who has loaded his Conscience with the Guilt of Dishonesty,

hon
Imp
and
and
in S
in th
upon
Choi
serve.

DISCOURSE I. 19

honesty, Uncharitableness, Falshood, or
Impiety; Compare Them in Wealth
and in Poverty; in Worldly Prosperity
and Worldly Distress; in Health, and
in Sickness; in the Hour of Death, and
in the Day of Judgment: And Then,
upon that Comparison, make your
Choice, and declare *Whom You will
serve.*

DISCOURSE

honorable, Unparalleled, Exalted, or
happy; Compare Them in Wealth
and in Poverty; in Worldly Prosperity
and Worldly Distress; in Health, and
in Sickness; in the Hour of Death, and
in the Day of Judgment; And Then
upon that Comparison, make your
Choice, and declare Where You will

28 SE 60

DISC

D

Am

m

in

D

th

I

his

pres

grea

We

Crea

L

now

DISCOURSE II.

JEREMIAH xxiii. 23, 24.

Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret Places, that I shall not see Him? Do not I fill Heaven and Earth? saith the Lord.

IN these Words We have what amounts to an Assertion from the Lord Himself of that Attribute of his Divinity, which is called his Omnipresence, or Presence in all Places. A great and singular Quality, in which We, and all his Servants thro' his whole Creation are very deeply interested.

Let Us therefore, as We have just now presented our Prayers and Praises

22 DISCOURSE II.

Him, the Author of our Being, turn our Thoughts, for a while, to the Contemplation of this wonderful Property of his Divine Nature. A subject always highly proper for our Meditation, but more particularly so at this Moment, since, if God be not Every where Present, It is in vain that we offer any Petitions, or any Thanksgivings unto Him.

Now it is not from this Portion of Scripture only that We learn that Jehovah is *a God at hand, and not a God afar off*. It is the uniform Language of the Inspired Writers, confirmed too by our own Reason, and by the Necessity of the Thing itself.

One of the Imperfections of Created Beings is to be confined to the narrow Limits of some-certain Space. We see Objects, which We cannot reach; and
hear

DISCOURSE II. 23

hear Sounds, the Cause of which We cannot see: We are informed by the Relation of others of the Transactions of Countries far removed from Us: and by History of the Deeds of former Ages. But Distance does not exist with regard to the Deity,—Either of Place, or of Time. If it did, his Knowledge must be deficient. Now that which wants any Thing cannot be Perfect: But God is Perfect.

Neither could He have created, and still support and govern this vast extended Universe, if He were absent from any Part of it. The Ministry of Angels, or any Subordinate Beings might be liable to Deception; and, if Necessary, would be a Proof of Weakness, or a Limited Power, which Things are inconsistent with the Idea of God. We believe however that He employs

24 DISCOURSE II.

those Ministers of his Word upon various Occasions: The Scripture assures us of it. But when He condescends to use their Service, It must be for their Sakes, not for his: To give Them Opportunities of increasing their Knowledge, and exercising their Gratitude and Obedience, and all the Powers which They have received from Him. It cannot be because He stands in need of their Ministry, or of Information from Them: If He did, They would be so far superior to Him, and He could not be their God.

In like manner We speak of God as residing in a particular Part of the Universe, and pray to Him under the Title of *Our Father which is in Heaven*. But These are Descriptions suited to the Narrowness of our Conceptions, who form our Ideas of Majesty and Power from what

DISCOURSE II. 25

what We have seen or heard of the Courts of Earthly Princes. God may have been pleased to choose some particular Place for the Residence of his holy Angels; for a visible Exhibition of some Part of his infinite Glory; and for their Adoration at the Foot of his Throne. But We ought to conceive of Him (as Solomon did, and as no doubt They do) as of a Being, Whom *the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain*; but Who is always equally present through all the Regions of infinite Space.

Neither was this true Notion of the supreme Deity entirely unknown to the Wifest of the Heathen People, such as saw through the Error, and Absurdity of the then established Religion. For the Priests, and Lawgivers, who settled and directed their Public Worship, must have entertained very mean Thoughts of

26 DISCOURSE II.

of the Chief their Gods, since, in their System, Every Thing had it's particular Deity. The Sun could not shine, nor the Earth yield it's Fruits, nor the Rivers flow, nor even an Oak flourish, without a God or Goddess of their own. In the mean while the Principal Object of their Worship, whom They stiled the King of Gods, and of Men, was asleep, or on a Journey, as Elijah reproached the Idol of the Israelites, or had placed himself upon the Top of some high Mountain to see what might pass upon Earth.

These you will certainly judge to be very low and contemptuous Representations of Divine Power. Yet the Religion of Papists, who might have learnt more worthy Thoughts of the Most High from the Bible, if it were a Book in any Credit with Them, is full of the same Absurdities, since They too have allotted

D
allotted
Mortal
in the E
to share
tron, fr
their G
City, a
which ex
gan Idol
Earth to
Supreme
What
praise hi
Grace an
those gro
we are ta
the One
Truth?
But ha
considered
unerring V

DISCOURSE II. 27

allotted a great Multitude of Canonized Mortals to assist the all sufficient Creator in the Exercise of his Government, and to share his Worship: A particular Patron, from amongst Those who sleep in their Graves, to every Country, and City, and almost Every Man: And, which exceeds even the Impiety of Pagan Idolaters, have erected a Power on Earth to dispense with the Laws of the Supreme Almighty God.

What great Reason then have We to praise his holy Name, Who, by his Grace and Mercy, are no longer under those gross Delusions, but worship, as we are taught by the Gospel of Christ, the One only God in Spirit and in Truth?

But have We Ourselves sufficiently considered the uncontrollable Power, the unerring Wisdom, and, above all, the Uni-

28 DISCOURSE II.

Universal Presence of the God whom We worship? Do We think, when We are upon our Knees before him, to Whom We are paying our Adoration? Do We endeavour to fix our Attention, to purge and purify our Minds from all sinful Thoughts, and to hold up clean Hands in his Sight, who not only heareth the Words of our Mouth, but knoweth the Hearts, from whence They proceed?

Let me read to You a pious Prayer of King David from the 139th Psalm.—

“ O Lord, Thou hast searched Me, and
 “ known Me: Thou knowest my Down-
 “ sitting, and Up-rising: Thou under-
 “ standest my Thoughts afar off. Thou
 “ compassiest my Path and my Bed,
 “ and art acquainted with all my Ways.
 “ For there is not a Word in my Tongue,
 “ but Lo! O Lord, Thou knowest it

“ alto-

D

“ altog
 “ thy S
 “ from
 “ into
 “ make
 “ Thou
 “ Wing
 “ the u
 “ there
 “ thy R
 “ I say
 “ me, E
 “ about
 “ not fro
 “ as the
 “ Light
 These
 ligious P
 ject now
 our thoug
 offering o

DISCOURSE II. 29

“ altogether. Whither shall I go from
“ thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee
“ from thy Presence? If I ascend up
“ into Heaven, Thou art There, If I
“ make my Bed in the Grave, behold
“ Thou art There also. If I take the
“ Wings of the Morning, and dwell in
“ the uttermost Parts of the Sea, even
“ there shall thine Hand lead me, and
“ thy Right Hand shall uphold me. If
“ I say surely the Darknefs shall cover
“ me, Even the Night shall be Light
“ about Me. Yea the Darknefs hideth
“ not from Thee: But the Night shineth
“ as the Day. The Darknefs and the
“ Light are both alike to Thee.”

These were the Sentiments of that Religious Prince upon the important Subject now before Us. But We may carry our thoughts farther, and when We are offering our Supplications and Thanksgivings

30 DISCOURSE II.

givings before the Divine Majesty, We may consider all the Host of Heaven, the Angels, and Arch Angels, Cherubim, and Seraphim, those glorious exalted Beings, as prostrated in a like humble Adoration before the Most High God. We may represent him also to our Minds as receiving the Homage of all his Rational Creatures through the immense extent of his Creation; of Those, who inhabit not only this small spot, the Earth on which We dwell: But of a Multitude, which no Man can number, of other Worlds, the Workmanship of his Hands. Surely, We cannot dwell too long upon this great astonishing Reflexion: We can never sufficiently admire, and reverence, and adore that infinitely comprehensive Mind, which is capable of attending, at one and the same Instant, to such a number-

less

D

less various
and super
not Th
lions u
Beings,
Petition
Let
higher,
Concept
pleasing
have stre
of Hum
drawn in
finitely
Let Us h
Minds to
conceive
Heaven
Heavenly
and the
Space; B

DISCOURSE II. 31

less variety of Worshippers; of knowing, and supplying all their Necessities; and not Their's only, but Those also of Millions upon Millions of other Living Beings, who have no Voice to utter their Petitions, nor Tongue to speak his Praise.

Let Us raise our Imaginations, still higher, and endeavour to enlarge our Conceptions upon this amazing but pleasing Object: Though, when We have stretched Them to the utmost Line of Human Intelligence, the Picture drawn in our Thoughts will fall still infinitely short of the great Original. Let Us however lift up our Hearts and Minds to the Lord, and endeavour to conceive of Him as filling not only Heaven and Earth, and those vast Heavenly Bodies, which roll around Us, and the whole unbounded Extent of Space; But as *the High and Lofty One,*
who,

32 DISCOURSE II.

who, (according to the sublime Description of the Prophet Isaiah) *inhabits Eternity*. To our limited Capacities a Computation by Days, and Years, and Ages is necessary: With God there is no Reckoning of Time: But *a Thousand Years are to Him as one Day, and one Day as a Thousand Years*. To Us there are Things already done: Things that are doing: and Things that are yet to Do: But in the infinite Comprehension of God there is no Past, nor Present, nor Future, as distinguished in our narrow Conception: But every Transaction of innumerable Ages and innumerable Beings: All that is, or has been, or can be Hereafter, *from Everlasting to Everlasting*, is seen, and known, and present to the Eternal Mind.

Thus

Th
em
as app
is still a
our mo
Knowle
For, w
be affur
and not
the Opi
Matter.
preaches
Us that
that ther
fest in bi
naked, a
whom W
Truth is
sages of
To wh
our Ideas

DISCOURSE II. 33

Thus far our Meditations have been employed upon the Divine Omnipresence as applied to Place, and Time. There is still another View of it, which deserves our most serious Attention: I mean his Knowledge of the Thoughts of Men. For, with respect to Them also we may be assured that our God *is a God at hand, and not a God afar off.* You have heard the Opinion of the Psalmist upon this Matter. The Apostle to the Hebrews preaches the same Doctrine. He tells Us that *God is a Discerner of the Heart, that there is no Creature that is not manifest in his Sight, and that all Things are naked, and open unto the Eyes of Him, to whom We are accountable.* And this great Truth is confirmed by many other Passages of Holy Scripture.

To what a Heighth then must it raise our Ideas of God, and how greatly increase

34 DISCOURSE II.

crease our Wonder, and Reverence to consider the inconceivable Capacity of that Being, who sees at one View all the Recollections, and Reasonings, and Designs, and Wishes of innumerable thinking Creatures; gives a constant Attention to their Thoughts, whether good, or bad; and listens to the secret Devotions of so many Hearts? Who has no need, as poor short-sighted Mortals have, to be acquainted with the Actions of Men, in order to judge of their Intentions, but knows the Sincerity of the Sincere, and the Hypocrisy of the Hypocrite, in it's very first inward Conception.

I have thus laid before You what has occurred to Me, upon considering that Declaration of the Lord in the Prophet Jeremiah, which I chose for the Subject of this Discourse, and have endeavoured to lead your Minds to some faint Idea

of

of that
mendo
Unive
raise yo
and to
and Ju
of his
Earth,
remem
nor per
Thoug
escape
live as b
selves to
their A

I hav
this Sub
next M

DISCOURSE II. 35

of that inexpressibly wonderful and tremendous Attribute of the Deity, his Universal Presence ; that, whenever you raise your Thoughts to Heavenly Things, and to God, the Father, and Preserver, and Judge of all Men, You may think of his adorable Majesty as filling Earth, as well as Heaven ; and may remember that You can speak no Word, nor perform an Action, nor entertain a Thought in your Hearts, which can escape his Infinite Knowledge ; and may live as becomes Those, who know Themselves to be always in the Presence of their Almighty Maker.

I have something farther to say upon this Subject, but must reserve it to our next Meeting.

D I S

J E

Am I a C

not a C

in secr

Do no

the La

A S

tions of

to whose

Mercy

We enjo

so there

adorable

Minds to

DISCOURSE III.

JEREMIAH xxiii. 23, 24.

Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret Places, that I shall not see Him? Do not I fill Heaven and Earth? saith the Lord.

AS there is Nothing so worthy of our Daily Contemplation as the several infinite Perfections of the God, who made Us, and to whose Wisdom, Power, Justice, and Mercy We are indebted for All that We enjoy Here, and hope Hereafter: so there is no One of those great and adorable Properties, which can raise our Minds to more exalted Conceptions of

38 DISCOURSE III.

the Divine Majesty, than This of his Universal Presence, which is here asserted by the Prophet.

In a former Discourse I laid before You some Reflexions upon that nobler, and inexhaustible Subject. I shewed you that the Omnipresence of God was a Doctrine of Scripture confirmed by Reason, and considered it in three different Lights, as respecting Place, and Time, and the Thoughts of Thinking Beings. I reserved for another opportunity to examine What Use We may make for our own Advantage of those awful and interesting Declarations, that "God
" filleth Heaven, and Earth; that No
" Man can hide himself from his Sight,
" being a God at hand, and not a God
" afar off," from You, and from Me, and from all Mankind.

It is
acquain
The M
what is
it is no
fected,
Admira
these T
riosity,
and no
tion, th
If We
to the
Improve
great I
should o
Let
what Re
the Sens
stant Pre
the Incr

DISCOURSE III. 39

It is indeed a delightful Thing to be acquainted with these sublime Truths: The Mind of Man takes Pleasure in what is magnificent and amazing. But it is not enough to have our Souls affected, for the present Moment, with Admiration and Reverence: If we hear these Things of God with an eager Curiosity, listening to them with the Same, and no greater, nor more lasting Attention, than We do to a *Tale that is told*; If We make no Application of Them to the Enlargement of our Piety, and Improvement of our Morals, There is great Danger lest Such Knowledge should only increase our Condemnation.

Let Us therefore now consider in what Respects We may properly apply the Sense, which We have of the constant Presence of God amongst Us, to the Increase of our Devotion towards

C 4

Him,

40 DISCOURSE III.

Him, to the Amendment of our Lives, and a conscientious Discharge of our Duty: And what Motives to Comfort in Distress, to Reliance upon his Goodness, or Fear of his Displeasure, may arise from that Persuasion.

And, in the first place, I dare say you will all be beforehand with me in making this Reflexion, that if God be *at hand* to hear our Prayers, and Praises, We ought to be zealous and constant in offering Them up to Him, whether in the Public Congregation, or privately by Ourselves. That We should rejoice in every Opportunity of returning our sincerest Thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father for his innumerable Blessings; and imploring the Continuance of them for the Sake of Christ Jesus our Saviour, in Whose Name We are *commanded* to present all our Petitions.

At

DISCOURSE III. 41

At the same time, if We take care to possess our Minds as We ought with just Apprehensions of that inconceivably awful Deity, in whose Presence We stand, We shall approach the Footstool of his Throne with the deepest Humility of Devotion, remembering from whence We were taken : That We are but of the Dust of the Earth ; not only weak, and helpless, but sinful and polluted Creatures ; unworthy, through our manifold Transgressions, of the Least of his Mercies ; and acknowledging his infinite Condescension in permitting Us to have any Intercourse, even through our blessed Mediator and Intercessor, with his offended Majesty.

And This Consideration should admonish Us to keep our Attention fixed, as much as possible, to the Subject of our Prayers, that We may not displease Him,

42 DISCOURSE III.

Him, to whom We make Them, by the Mixture of any other Thoughts, much less any light and unworthy Ones. If you had a Favour to ask of a Man like Yourself, your Mind would certainly go with your Words : How much more, when You are admitted to the Privilege of making your Desires known to your Almighty Maker ?

The next Thing is, when you join with the Congregation in confessing, and bewailing your Sins, and ask God's Pardon of Them, that you do it with a firm Resolution of forsaking Them, since it is a Mockery of his Justice to beg Forgiveness of those Provocations, which You intend to continue ; and a kind of Defiance of his Vengeance, who is *at hand* to inflict some dreadful immediate Punishment upon your Hypocrisy.

2. Thus

DISCOURSE III. 43

2. Thus far We have considered the Divine Omnipresence as a Reason for our Increase in Devotion and Piety towards Him. Let Us see what Operation it ought to have upon our Behaviour in respect to the Amendment of our Lives.

Now there is not perhaps a Man living, not even the greatest Sinner, who, if the Question were put to Him, Which was most to be feared, God, or Man, would not answer God. And yet We see that the Practice of Multitudes supposes the very Reverse to be the true Answer. For they appear by their Actions to be much more afraid of the Creature than of the Creator. In the Presence of the Earthly Magistrate, who can at most but *destroy the Body*, They will commit neither Murther, nor Robbery, nor any other Crime punishable by the Law. But in the Sight of the
Most

44 DISCOURSE III.

Most High God, who can *destroy both Body and Soul in Hell*, They sin without Fear or Remorse.

And in like manner those smaller Proficients in the School of Wickedness, who will talk Prophanely, or Obscenely in the hearing of their Maker, have still so much Reverence for their Parents, Masters, and other Superiors, that They put on an Air of Sanctity and Modesty before Them, little considering, how highly their Offence against God is aggravated by their refusing to abstain from those Things, out of Regard to his Commandment, and to his Presence, which They shew that They can abstain from, to escape the Censure, or Chastisement of Men.

And surely, there must be a strange Perversity in the Nature of those Men, and a wonderful Absurdity in their Reasonings,

sonings,
Powerfu
eth Iniq
Actions,
and a V
can yet
speak, a
the Rea
hide Th
be cove
from the
It was
that a
tempted
Pleasure
He cou
both fro
tians, w
Works
istence;
Plenitud

DISCOURSE III. 45

sonings, Who, knowing that a just, all-Powerful Being, the Lord, who detesteth Iniquity, is the Inspector of all their Actions, the Observer of all their Words, and a Witness to all their Thoughts, can yet bring Themselves to act, and speak, and think, as if they were out of the Reach of his Knowledge, or could hide Themselves in secret Places, and be covered by Privacy and Darkeness from the All-seeing Eye of God.

It was a Maxim of Pagan Philosophy, that a truly good Man would not be tempted by any Profit, or Honour, or Pleasure, to do an ill Action, though He could be sure of it's Concealment both from Gods, and Men. We Christians, who have the Word as well as Works of God, to assure Us of his Existence; under a full Conviction of the Plenitude of his Power, of the Perfection

46 DISCOURSE III.

tion of his Knowledge, and of the Certainty of his universal Presence; neither doubting of his Hatred to all Kinds of Sin; nor of his resolution to Punish it to the Utmost;—are still satisfied, and at Ease in our Minds, if We can hide our Abomination from the Eyes of our Fellow Mortals.

If This appears to You, as it undoubtedly must, the highest Degree of Stupidity and Madness, You may learn Wisdom from the Folly of Others. Imagine that You were allowed to see with your mortal Eyes the great Lord of Heaven and Earth, in all the Splendor of his Glorious Majesty, and all the Beauties of his perfect Holiness, would not such a Vision strike you through with Terror and Astonishment! Would it not fill your Hearts with the humblest Veneration, and Fear of offending! Would it not raise in you an ardent Ambition

Ambition
ble in h
resolve
Him, l
are feel
transito
pared v
Mighty
ness of
ous for
We a
that He
If We
be possib
bour in
Could V
fore the
lute our
under th
This I
Minds to

DISCOURSE III. 47

Ambition to render Yourself acceptable in his Sight? Why cannot We then resolve to behave always, as if We saw Him, by Whom We are sure that We are seen? What are all the delusive, transitory Enjoyments of Vice, compared with the Approbation of that Mighty Being, in whose Presence is *Fullness of Joy, and Pleasures* for the Virtuous for Evermore?

We are told by the pious Psalmist, that He *set the Lord always before Him*. If We followed his Example, would it be possible for Us to injure our Neighbour in the Sight of the God of Justice? Could We be cruel or uncharitable before the Father of all Mercies? Or pollute our Hearts with sinful Thoughts under the Inspection of Spotless Purity?

This Reflection, if we accustomed our Minds to it, would be the most availing
 Prefer-

48 DISCOURSE III.

Preservative against all Ungodliness. We should say, as Joseph did, when tempted to commit a shameful Transgression, "How can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?" Against that avenging God in whose Presence I am? We could never bring Ourselves to take his Name in vain by such prophane Oaths, and impious Curses, as are uttered every Day by thoughtless Men; nor dare even to mention it in our common worldly Conversation; if we considered that We were heard by Him, who has declared that He will not hold such Transgressors guiltless. We should dread to make the least unjust Profit to Ourselves by secret Pilfering, Over-reaching, or any kind of Dishonesty, if we reflected, that, though concealed from Man, It is known to Him, who hath said *Thou shalt not*

Steal.

Steal.

vent an
selves f
deeply
every V
his Hea
the God

3. T
Uses of
constant
Inlarger
and who
Repenta
entious A
a Dread
not only
the Hop
but the
worldly
cumstanc
oppressed

DISCOURSE III. 49

Steal. And lastly, We should never invent any Falshood, not even to save Ourselves from Worldly Disgrace, if it were deeply impressed on our Minds, that every Word of our Mouth is spoken in his Hearing, who hateth a Lye, being the God of Truth.

3. To such, Who make these Good Uses of the Doctrine of God Almighty's constant Presence with Them, for the Inlargement of their Devotion and Piety, and who live, as in his Eye, in a sincere Repentance of their Sins, and a conscientious Adherence to their Duty, through a Dread of displeasing *Him*, there arises, not only an inexpressible Delight from the Hope of his gracious Acceptance, but the highest Consolation in every worldly Distress. If they fall into Circumstances of Calamity and Grief; are oppressed with Poverty or Sicknes;

D

posed

50 DISCOURSE III.

posed to the Scorn and Outrage of Wicked Doers; They have learnt from Scripture that *God is at their Right Hand*, and therefore are *not moved*. They know that He is not only a Help, but *a very present Help in Trouble*; and that They may safely rely on his Good Providence, not to *suffer Them to be tempted by Afflictions beyond what They can bear*.

Under this Conviction, They will *wait patiently for the Lord*; and though out of the Reach of any Human Assistance, Their Knowledge that He, their Protector, *is not afar off*, will inspire Them with Comfort in Sorrow, Courage in Danger, and Chearfulness in Want, or Pain; as having a firm Assurance that God is an Eye-witness both to their Distresses, and their Behaviour under Them; that He will, in due Time, grant Them Deliverance from
Suf.

Suffer
signati
nal We

4.

in Dar

shall W

py Men

no God

observe

scribe t

Mind,

sence of

and wh

his Terr

to exerc

ment?

In th

all, whi

der how

this Lig

Prophet

DISCOURSE III. 51

Sufferings, and reward their patient Resignation to his Holy Will with *an Eternal Weight of Glory*.

4. This is *the Light which springs up in Darkneſs* to the true Believer. What ſhall We ſay to the Caſe of thoſe unhappy Men, who have lived as if there were no God in the World, or no God, who obſerved their Actions? Who can deſcribe the Horror and Anguiſh of that Mind, whoſe firſt Thought of the Preſence of God is upon the Bed of Death; and who can now ſee the Lord only in his Terrors, as *a God at Hand* no longer to exerciſe Mercy, but to execute Judgment?

In this Light too it becomes us all, whiſt We are in Health, to conſider how near our God is to us; For in this Light too, the Declaration in the Prophet may be juſtly applied. We

52 DISCOURSE III.

can know nothing with greater Certainty than These Truths, that there is no Dependence upon the Continuation of our Lives, no not for a Day ; and that *after Death cometh the Judgment*. We may therefore justly consider our Judge as already at the Door. A terrible Consideration to the Wicked, but full of all Comfort to the Righteous ! A most serious and important one to all Mankind ! And, whether the Souls of departed Men shall be removed, immediately after Death, to some Receptacle, which God may have prepared for Them to remain in till the great Day of Account ; Or whether They shall sleep in the Grave with their Bodies to the Time of our general Resurrection ; We may most truly, and most usefully, in every Hour of our Lives, represent our Ever-blessed Lord to our Thoughts, as ready to ascend

cend
imagin
Proph
on the
like the
burning
coming
Thousa
string to
Ten T
When y
Meditat
Scene, T
the Who
the only
main, th
Former
the Left
All waiti
tence, w
Condition

DISCOURSE III. 53

cend his Judgment Seat : We may even imagine that We behold Him, as the Prophet Daniel did in a Vision, sitting on the Throne of his Glory, a Throne like the fiery Flame, and it's Wheels as burning Fire. With Rivers of Fire coming forth from before Him : A Thousand Thousands of Angels ministering to Him, and Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand standing before Him. When you have set before your Eyes by Meditation this Solemn, and affecting Scene, Turn then to the Gospel, and see the Whole Race of Mankind divided, by the only Distinction, that will then remain, the Just from the Unjust : The Former on the Right, The Latter on the Left Hand of that high Tribunal : All waiting to hear the impartial Sentence, which is to determine their final Condition.

D 3

By

54 DISCOURSE III.

By looking forward to this tremendous Conclusion of our Mortal State, We may, by God's Blessing, make a wise and certain Provision for Eternity; and by an habitual Consideration of his Presence with Us Here, secure to Ourselves a happy Enjoyment of it for Ever.

This is the *One Thing necessary*: God grant Us all Grace to attend to It.

D I S-

D I

Promote

nor t

God i

and s

T

and Pro

taken i

wherein

knowled

with his

Wicked,

ous.

DISCOURSE IV.

PSALM lxxv. 6, 7.

*Promotion cometh neither from the East,
nor the West, nor from the South.—But
God is the Judge: He putteth down One,
and setteth up Another.*

THIS Psalm seems to have been written in the Design of asserting the Universal Dominion, and Providence of God. Some have taken it to be a Kind of Dialogue, wherein God declares, and Man acknowledges, his Sovereignty over All, with his just Resentment against the Wicked, and his Favour to the Righteous.

56 DISCOURSE IV.

The two Verses, which are the subject of this Discourse, will bear such a double Interpretation. Promotion may be understood as well of every kind of Superiority, which One Man has over Another, in Birth, or Dignity, Fortune, Health, or Strength, Understanding or Learning, and the like Advantages either of Body or Mind: Or it may mean the Rewards of Virtue, or Obedience.

Of all These God Almighty is the Original Giver: They do not come without his Express Order, or Permission, from this Place, or from That, so as that We should be able to trace Them up to any other Cause, either Accidental, or in our own Power; or that We might go for Them, as a Merchant does for his Cargo, to the Countries, be they East or West, or North, or South, where He is sure of finding it. But it is God, who,
being

being
dains a
Low,
ficient,
Judgm
dual fo
assign
Recom
Punish
grees o
of the
In both
by the
*God is t
and sett*
Let
ferences
Truths,
duct; a
Acknov

DISCOURSE IV. 57

being the King of the whole Earth, ordains all the Distinctions of High, and Low, Rich, and Poor, Capable or Deficient, according to his own unerring Judgment of the Fitness of each Individual for the Post, which he is pleased to assign him; and who proportions the Recompences of Righteousness, and the Punishments of Sin to the several Degrees of Each, by his certain Knowledge of the respective Merits of his Subjects. In both these Senses it is truly affirmed by the Author of this pious Psalm, that *God is the Judge, who putteth down One, and setteth up Another.*

Let us therefore consider what Inferences may be drawn from these great Truths, for the Direction of our Conduct; and what Duties result from the Acknowledgment of them.

And,

58 DISCOURSE IV.

1. And, First, If God is indeed the only Ruler, and Governor in his own Creation; If He disposes every Thing in this World *as seemeth best to his infinite Wisdom*; We should be cautious of ascribing the Events of Life to a wrong Cause; least in so doing We be found to act injuriously to our Maker, as giving to some other Principle the Honour, which is due to him alone. Now to this Censure Those People seem to be liable, who attribute any Good or Ill, which befalls Them, to what is called Chance; a Cause existing only in their own Imagination, and without any Reality in Nature. It is true that the Gentiles of old built Temples, and sacrificed Victims to a fictitious Deity, which They worshipped under the Name of Fortune: But This is not an Example for Christians, who are taught by the
Scripture

Scripture
seem to
ject to
under
read in
Lot is ca
posing th
fore tha
our Suc
good, or
ledgmen
setting u
Kingdom
his stead
Neith
Our ow
other M
from our
exclusive
We, and
Things,

DISCOURSE IV. 59

Scripture that even those Things, which seem to be, more than Others, subject to mere Hazard, and Chance, are under Divine Direction: For so you read in the Book of Proverbs, that *the Lot is cast into the Lap, but the whole disposing thereof is in the Lord.* To say therefore that our Promotion or Abasement, our Success or Miscarriage, are owing to good, or ill Luck, without any Acknowledgment of God's Providence, is like setting up a Rival against Him in his Kingdom, and worshipping an Idol in his stead.

Neither ought We to impute, either to Our own Contrivance, or to That of other Men, the Events, which follow from our own Actions, or from Their's, exclusively of God's Providence. Both We, and They are in Truth, in many Things, the Honour of Which We
igno-

60 DISCOURSE IV.

ignorantly, and presumptuously give to Ourselves, or to Them, but Instruments under Him, in carrying the Plans of his Government into Execution. We do indeed act as our Reason, or Fancy moves us; But, when We do so, it is wholly by his Permission, in whom *We live, and move, and have our Being.* And the Event of our Actions is dependent upon Him only.

You see with what Humility, and how justly the great Apostle Paul speaks of those Actions, which might have raised a less Religious Heart to Pride, and Self-Sufficiency: For, though he had laboured more abundantly than all his Brethren in the Cause of Christ; though he saw many Thousands of Heathen Idolaters converted by his Preaching to the Truth of the Gospel; yet you hear him saying to the Corinthians concerning

cerning
bourer
Minister
as the L
planted,
the Incr
The
and pio
Princes,
Testame
The Fo
Book of
this great
House of
Power, a
The latte
the Apost
parel, sat
an Oration
" It is
But it is

DISCOURSE IV. 61

cerning Himself, and his Fellow Labourer—*Who is Paul, who is Apollos, but Ministers by whom You have believed, even as the Lord gave to Every Man? I have planted, Apollos watered, But God gave the Increase.*

The Reverse of this sincerely humble and pious Character, were the two great Princes, Nebuchadnezzar in the Old Testament, and Herod in the New. The Former (as you may see in the Book of Daniel) spoke, and said, *Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the House of the Kingdom, by the Might of my Power, and for the Honour of my Majesty.* The latter (we are told in the Acts of the Apostles) *being arrayed in Royal Apparel, sat upon his Throne, and having made an Oration, the People gave a Shout, saying, "It is the Voice of God, not of Man."* But it is worth our Remarking, and Remeni-

62 DISCOURSE IV.

Remembering too, how suddenly the Judgment of God fell upon these impious Men. For, as to the First, We read, that *whilst the Word was in the King's Mouth, there fell a Voice from Heaven, saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, To Thee it is spoken, The Kingdom is departed from Thee.* And as to Herod, It follows in the Acts, that *Because He gave not God the Glory (that is, because He took to Himself the Blasphemous Flattery of the People) The Angel of the Lord smote Him immediately, and He was eaten of Worms, and gave up the Ghost.*

The constant Language of Scripture is, that All is to be ascribed to God. You cannot but remember our Saviour's Answer to Pilate in St. John's Gospel. *Pilate said to Jesus, Knowest Thou not that I have Power to crucify Thee, and Power to release Thee. Jesus answered,*

Thou

Thou
me, ex
And
Good
nor ot
the Pfa
says, T
titude of
livered b
vain The
liver any
Lord is o
These
Admoni
as Kings
us enqui
the Inspi
Events o
the House
vain that
the City, th

DISCOURSE IV. 63

Thou couldst have no Power at all against me, except it were given from above.

And that We ought to impute our Good Successes no more to other Men, nor other Things, than to Ourselves, the Psalmist will inform Us, where He says, *There is no King saved by the Multitude of an Host: A mighty Man is not delivered by much Strength: An Horse is a vain Thing for Safety, neither shall He deliver any Man by his great Strength: The Lord is our Help, and our Shield.*

These Instances you may say contain Admonitions to Those in High Rank, as Kings, and Generals of Armies. Let us enquire if the same be not applied by the Inspired Writers to the Common Events of Life. *Except the Lord build the House* (says David) *They labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain.*

Lo

64 DISCOURSE IV.

Lo Children are an Heritage of the Lord, and the Fruit of the Womb is his Reward. The Husbandman may perhaps think himself indebted to his own Industry and Skill alone, for the Quantity and Goodness of his Crop : But He should know that it is *God, who giveth Rain, both the Former, and the Latter, in it's Season, and appointeth the Weeks of the Harvest.* The Prophet Habbakuk's Expressions are very remarkable, for he treats the attributing of the Success of our Actions to any Thing but God's Providence, as a Kind of Idolatry—*They sacrifice (says He) to their Net, and burn Incense to their Drag, because by Them their Portion is fat, and their Meat plenteous.*

The Second Inference is, that, if the whole Arrangement of Human Affairs, the Disposal of Men into different Ranks, the Endowing of Them with different

differe
of Wh
be from
endeav
Station
Every
Talent
tunities
Confide
tinction
They a
Creator
That V
and, un
ence, a
Love.

Who
says St.
Thou did
receive in
badst not

DISCOURSE IV. 65

different Capacities, and the Distribution of What We call Good, and Evil Here, be from God, It follows that We should endeavour to act suitably to the several Stations, in which He has placed Us, Every Man studying to improve that Talent, those Powers, and those Opportunities, which God has given Him. Consider, that, whatever Worldly Distinctions there may be amongst Us, They are established by our Common Creator for wise and necessary Reasons; That We are all equally his Children, and, unless We forfeit it by Disobedience, all equally the Children of his Love.

Who maketh Thee to differ from Another, says St. Paul, *and what hast Thou that Thou didst not receive? Now, if Thou didst receive it, Why dost Thou glory as if Thou hadst not received it?* If the Rich, and

E

Ho-

66 DISCOURSE IV.

Honourable pride Themselves upon their superior Degree, and despise the Poor, They abuse the Gifts of God, acting as if the Kingdom were Theirs, not His, and forgetting that They too have a *Master in Heaven*. If Those of low Condition repine, and envy the Situation of their Superiors, Their Murmuring is against God's Providence, who has made Them what They are.

It is, I doubt not, thought a Hardship by Many, that They were born to earn their Bread by the Sweat of their Brows, whilst Others fare sumptuously upon the Fruit of their Labour. But *They charge God foolishly*, and inconsiderately. For, first, without Subordination, Society could not all subsist: If all were Equal, where would be the Power to punish Vice, to guard Property, and to protect Innocence? If Every Man laboured

laboured
there b
whose I
ding for
The
in subm
stances,
ing the
certainly
ture State
Deficiency
Ones, be
false Judg
of our o
People.
the Minds
ward Circ
Them, Yo
Places with
wretched th

DISCOURSE IV. 67

laboured for Himself alone, Who would there be to assist, and support Those, whose Infirmities prevented their providing for Themselves?

The true Wisdom therefore consists in submitting patiently, in all Circumstances, to God's Providence, and leaving the final Event to Him, who will certainly not fail to make up, in a future State, all the *real* Inequalities, and Deficiencies in This. I say the *real* Ones, because We are very apt to form false Judgments upon the Comparison of our own State with That of other People. Happiness, and Misery are in the Minds of Men, Not in their outward Circumstances. If you judge by Them, You may often wish to change Places with One, who is tentimes more wretched than Yourself.

68 DISCOURSE IV.

A Third Inference from the above Doctrine is, that, since all Superiority or Promotion comes from God, We should be thankful to his Providence for those Advantages, whatever They be, either of Mind, or Body, whereby it has pleased Him to distinguish Us from the Bulk of Mankind: And That, not with the haughty and insolent Gratitude of the Pharisee in the Parable, nor with our Lips only, but by Obedience to his Will, and with an humble Acknowledgment of our Unworthiness of his Mercy; Considering always the Ends, for which his Goodness may have blessed Us with any extraordinary Qualification, and employing it, as far as may be in our Power, in the Service, and to the Glory of the Giver.

Now this particular Duty of Thankfulness may perhaps be thought to be
long

long to
Worldl
Case.
of Man
to exci
perhaps
their Po
when al
taken in
any Hu
not, act
Mind w
ferings:
making
joyments
throw o
Calamiti
Folly,
brought
imaginar
Melanch

DISCOURSE IV. 69

long to Those only, who abound in Worldly Goods: But that is not the Case. The most indigent and distressed of Mankind have still Matter sufficient to excite their Gratitude to God, nay perhaps ought to be thankful even for their Poverty. It is my Opinion, that, when all Things, even of this Life are taken into the Account, there is scarce any Human Being, whose Comforts do not, actually, or *might not*, if his own Mind were not in fault, exceed his Sufferings: I say *might not*, because, in making this Comparison between Enjoyments, and the Contrary, We must throw out of the Reckoning all those Calamities, which Men by their own Folly, Perverseness, or Vice, have brought upon Themselves; and all those imaginary Unhappineffes too, with which Melancholy, and Fanciful People dis-

70 DISCOURSE IV.

quiet their own Souls. And it is a great Argument of the Truth of this Opinion, that, in general, even Those, who complain most of their Situation, are still as eager to live on, as Those, who are more at their Ease.

But, be That as it will : There are still not only numerous Blessings, but some Superiorities too, which may be enjoyed in the Lower Conditions of Life, but which are not so much reflected on as They ought to be. The Poorest Man alive may be happier in his Wife, Children, or other Relations, than the most Opulent. He may have much better Health, fewer Anxieties, a Quieter Conscience, and above all may excel in the most valuable of all Excellencies, Religion, and Virtue.

There are other very important Pre-eminences too, in which He has his full Share.

Share.
We ble
tion, an
of Us g
pleased
give Us
his Crea
Reason,
this Par
wherein
maintain
Goodnes
the Brut
is a gre
specting
their Sta
it is atten
and Emin
devout P
ficent Au
mean is h

DISCOURSE IV. 71

Share. In the Prayers of our Church, We bless God particularly for our *Creation*, and We have certainly Every One of Us great Cause to do it, since it has pleased Him to bring Us into Being, to give Us so distinguished a Rank amongst his Creatures, by the invaluable Gift of Reason, which places us at the Head of this Part of God's Universal Kingdom, wherein We dwell; and enables Us to maintain that Dominion, which his Goodness has allotted to Us, over all the Brute Inhabitants of it. Here then is a great, and general Promotion, respecting the whole Human Race, and their State in the Present World: And it is attended with another Distinction, and Eminence, which demands our most devout Praises of the Liberal, and Beneficent Author of our Being. What I mean is his having created Us in a Ca-

72 DISCOURSE IV.

capacity of inheriting Eternal Life, and Happiness. If indeed We are indifferent about our future State, and will make no Provision here for Eternity, We shall have little Reason hereafter to rejoice in that Distinction. But the Mercy of God is the Same, who, by the wonderful Love, which He has shewn to Mankind, in our Redemption thro' his Son our Saviour, has demonstrated to Us his Willingness that All Ranks and Degrees of Men should partake of that great Salvation.

Let Those therefore, who are full of Discontent and Uneasiness upon account of their Hard, and Laborious Condition in this World, reflect upon these Things with Gratitude, and wait with Patience to see the End of God Almighty's Dispensation, Qualifying Themselves, in the mean While, by Repen-

tance

DISCOURSE IV. 73

rance of their past Sins, by Obedience to his Commands, and Reliance upon his Promises in Christ Jesus, (which is Faith) for the great Day of his Appearance, when it will be known to all, which was the true Object of Envy, whether Luxurious, Ill-spent, and at best always Dangerous Wealth, or Virtuous, Contented Poverty.

Fourthly—At the Beginning of this Discourse, I observed to You, that the Promotion, which is said by the Psalmist to come neither from the East, nor from the West, but from God, who is Judge on whom He will bestow it, might be applied, as well to the Rewards of Virtue in this World, as to any other Superiority of one Man over Another. And it is certainly true, since it is the Language of the New Testament, as well as the Old, that the Righteous are blest

74 DISCOURSE IV.

blest, even Here, for their Righteousness, We cannot indeed distinguish with Certainty which are Blessings in every particular Case, and which not; nor the Motives and Rule of God Almighty's Proceeding in the Distribution of Temporal Benefits and Enjoyments. But We may rely upon the Assurance of our Blessed Saviour, that the Fact is so.

If We see a Man, who had before born a good Character amongst his Neighbours, fall into any extraordinary Degree of Distress, or Sickness, or Pain, We are too hasty in concluding Him Unhappy, or a Hypocrite, because he suffers. For We are not sufficiently acquainted with the real State of his Mind under what appears so grievous to Us, nor able to form any true Judgment with regard to the Sincerity of his Virtues. It is possible that God may sup-

ply

ply h
which
Him f
Faith,
ence,
his Fu
Epistle
Lord lo
On
raised t
with th
They b
better M
a Mist
ternal S
other to
motions
Approb
be torm
fluence,
Conscien

DISCOURSE IV. 75

ply him with Inward Consolations, to which We are Strangers ; or may afflict Him for the Tryal of his Patience, and Faith, the Improvement of his Obedience, and consequently the Increase of his Future Reward ; as We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews that *Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.*

On the other hand, if the Wicked are raised to Wealth and Honour, and filled with the good Things of this World, They become often Objects of Envy to better Men than **Themselves**. But it is a Mistake to infer Happiness from external Shew and Figure : and it is Another to look upon these Earthly Promotions to be certain Marks of God's Approbation. An Ungodly Man may be tormented, in the midst of his Affluence, with the Reproaches of his Conscience : If He be not, He is but
so

56 DISCOURSE IV.

so much the more Miserable; as his Case is then more desperate with regard to a Future State. Neither are these Things, which are so highly esteemed by Us, in any other Sense Blessings, than as They are well used, and made conducive to our everlasting Happiness: If They were Blessings absolutely, and in Themselves, They would not be bestowed, as they often are, upon the Worst of Men.

But Whatever vain Imaginations may enter into the Heart of Man, Whatever Doubts or Suspicions He may entertain now with regard to the Proceedings of his Maker, We shall be All, in the End, fully convinced of this great Truth, that *The Lord is Righteous in all his Ways, and Holy in all his Works*; and shall very probably then find, that those Dispositions of Providence, which we complain of as
Hard-

D
Hardsh
Proofs
Such
become
ther of
Hearts,
One, and
for our
Obedien
Exertion
please H
We all c
Conditio
when all
tween t
We shal
and full

DISCOURSE IV. - 77

Hardships, were in Truth the greatest Proofs of Mercy to Us.

Such Difficulties, therefore, It will become Us to leave entirely to the Father of Spirits, and Searcher of all Hearts, *The Judge who putteth down One, and setteth up Another.* It is enough, for our Encouragement to persevere in Obedience to his holy Laws, and for the Exertion of our utmost Endeavours to please Him, to know with Certainty (as We all do) that, whatever may be our Condition in this World; In the Next, when all Accounts will be ballanced between the Creator, and the Creature, We shall not fail to receive our just, and full *Recompence of Reward.*

DIS-

D I

The Poor
Them.

Or as

The Poor

L

Second

Third
Poor in

Now
need not

DISCOURSE V.

MATTHEW xi. 5.

The Poor have the Gospel preached unto Them.

Or as it should rather be translated.

The Poor have the good News told Them.

LET Us enquire, First, What this Gospel, or *Good News* is.

Secondly, Why it is called *Good News*.

Thirdly, Why it is *Good News* to the Poor in particular.

Now as to the first Question, You need not be told that the Gospel, or
Good

80 DISCOURSE V.

Good News (for so the Word Gospel signifies) mentioned in the Text, is the Coming of Jesus Christ upon Earth, to instruct Mankind more perfectly in the Law of God; to inform Them of the Terms, upon which their Sins would be forgiven; to make known to Them the Certainty of a Resurrection to Eternal Life; with the Rewards of Faith, and Obedience; to lay down his Life as a Propitiation for their Iniquities; and lastly to confirm the Truth of his Mission, and Doctrine, by Rising himself from the Dead. Or, in other Words, to tell Us, that if We will comply with the Will of God as delivered and explained to Us by Jesus Christ, acknowledging Him as our Lawgiver, our Guide, our Lord, and our Saviour; repenting, and forsaking our past Evil Ways, and serving God for the future

sincerely,

sincere
raised
raised,
Enjoy
with hi

Se

The

clared
claimed
Shepher
all Peop
News,

Heaven

It was t

to Mose

deliver,

the Com

dark Pro

to be ex

Comple

Messiah

DISCOURSE V. 81

sincerely, and to the End; We shall be raised hereafter, as Christ himself was raised, from the Sleep of Death, to the Enjoyment of Everlasting Happiness with him in a better world.

Secondly.

These were undoubtedly, as was declared by the Angel, when He proclaimed the Birth of the Messiah to the Shepherds, *Glad Tydings of Great Joy to all People*: The greatest, and best Good News, which was ever brought from Heaven to Earth. It does not appear that It was told to Adam, or to Noah, or to Moses, so explicitly that They might deliver, and leave it upon Record for the Comfort of their Posterity. Some dark Prophetic Hints were indeed given, to be explained in due Time by their Completion; and, as the Age of the Messiah grew nearer, the Revelations

F
made

82 DISCOURSE V.

made to the later Prophets were more clear and intelligible: But We do not find in Scripture that They had any positive and direct Assurance of a future Resurrection from the Grave. We are indeed told by our Saviour, that *Abraham saw his Day*, God Almighty having, no doubt, vouchsafed to Him, in Whom, as the great Progenitor of Christ, all the Nations of the Earth were to be blessed, some Foresight of his Coming, by a particular Revelation. And We read that, though at the Distance of so many hundred Years, when he saw that great Day of Redemption, *He was Glad*. But the Publishing, and Proclaiming of those Glad Tydings, the *bringing Life and Immortality to Light*, was reserved to the Son of God, who condescended to be Himself the Messenger, as well as Author of our Salvation. It is by Him,
and

and t
receiv
the G
pentan
The
before
find it
and de
of Dea
Father
They
would
Resurre
find TH
Wicked
famous,
Shame
what a
those A
as in th
We read

DISCOURSE V. 83

and through Him alone, that We have received This, the most gracious of all the Gifts of our merciful Creator, *Repentance unto Life Everlasting.*

The Description of the Heathen World before the Coming of Christ, as We find it in the Scriptures, is indeed dark, and deplorable. Born to the Inheritance of Death, as the Descendents of a Forefather, who had forfeited Immortality, They were sure that this Mortal Life would end, but had no Certainty of a Resurrection. At the same Time We find Them given up to all Manner of Wickedness, and practising the most infamous, and execrable Vices without Shame or Remorse. We may judge to what a Degree the Abominations of those Ages were carried, even so early as in the Time of Abraham, by what We read in the Book of Genesis of the

84 DISCOURSE V.

State of that great City, which God destroyed by Fire from Heaven. For, if there had been only Ten good Men found Therein, God would have spared it *for the Ten's Sake*. But those antient Gentile-People, with scarce any Exception, and their Successors, throughout all the then known World, had lost the Remembrance, not only of God's Laws, but of God himself too. The Worship due to Him, the only true Lord, Maker of Heaven and Earth, was paid to the Sun, Moon, and Stars; to dead Men and Women; to Evil Spirits; and even to Birds, Beasts, and Plants, and to Stocks and Stones: Nay the Religion of the Wisest and most Civilized People among them, as established by their Laws, was the grossest and most Diabolical Idolatry; for there was no kind of Immorality, which had

not

not i

or O

It

of th

tion,

ing S

selves

Conter

Superf

But th

far from

World,

Us) in

Death.

It m

in the n

some of

whom

from se

doubtful

Death,

DISCOURSE V. 85

not it's Practicers, and Patrons in Some, or Other of their False Gods.

It is however true, that in the Midst of this universal Depravity and Pollution, there arose some few more discerning Spirits, who had reasoned Themselves into the Practice of Virtue, and a Contempt of the absurd, and unworthy Superstitions of the Age They lived in. But those dim and feeble Lights were far from sufficient to illuminate a whole World, which lay (as St. Paul acquaints Us) *in Darknes and the Shadow of Death.*

It must be acknowledged also, that in the most refined Times of Paganism, some of the Wifest of the Heathens, whom They called Philosophers, had, from several Arguments, conceived a doubtful Expectation of a Life after Death, and of Rewards, and Punish-

ments attending it. But the Doctrine fell into bad Hands, and was so ridiculously dressed up, and disfigured by their Poets in improbable Fables, that it could have no general Influence upon the Moral Behaviour of Mankind, and was not, as One of their own Authors in a later Age tells Us, believed even by Children.

In the mean while, With regard to That, which is the great Comfort, and Boast of Christianity, the Grant of Pardon to Repentant Sinners, They had certainly, neither Philosophers, nor People, the least Knowledge, nor Assurance. There was indeed an Opinion amongst Them, that the Anger of their Gods might be appeased: But it went, and could, upon the Principles of mere unassisted Human Reason, go no farther, than a bare Hope that it might be so.

This

This
superf
greater
Cerem
and S
But b
Propit
They i
trous M
cell it,
Attone
Neit
when
a State
at that
and W
They
and wer
such as
be, wh
Scribes,

DISCOURSE V. 87

This however put Them upon several superstitious Methods of expiating their greater Transgressions, as by various Ceremonies, Washings, Abstinences, and Sacrifices to their Infernal Deities. But being ignorant of the only true Propitiation for Sin, the Blood of Christ, They increased their Guilt by the Idolatrous Means which They used to cancel it, and contrived to make their very Attonements Criminal.

Neither were the Jews Themselves, when Christ came into the World, in a State of much greater Purity, though, at that time indeed, free from Idolatry, and Worshippers of the true God. For They too had corrupted their Ways, and were, in regard to Moral Virtue, such as a People might be expected to be, whose Teachers, and Guides, the Scribes, and Pharisees, are stiled by

88 DISCOURSE V.

bleſſed Saviour, a Generation of Vipers. There was one Set of Men too amongſt Them, called Sadducees, who profeſſed the Diſbelief of a Future State.

Judge then from this Picture of the Whole World, as well Jew as Gentile, at the Time when it pleaſed God to ſend his Son into it, what Need They all had of a Teacher and Redeemer. Judge too what Cauſe They had, and what We too have, who are deſcended from Heathen Anceſtors, and ſhould doubtleſs, if Chriſt had not come, have inherited both their Vices, and Impieties.—What Cauſe, I ſay, both They and We have, and our Poſterity will have alſo, to rejoyce with exceeding great Joy in the Arrival of our Univerſal Deliverer.

St. Luke acquaints us in the ſecond Chapter of his Goſpel, with what Exul-

tation

tation
cy of
a Mult
who g
Good W
Accept
faſing t
You
dinary D
by Sime
Iſraelite
Saviour
eight D
God, in
ſtill repe
might ne
Eyes had
The Ligh
Glory of
himſelf a
Human

DISCOURSE V. 89

tation and Triumph this infinite Mercy of God to Man was proclaimed by a Multitude even of the Heavenly Host, who glorified God for that *Peace* and *Good Will*, that is, Reconciliation and Acceptance, which He was then vouchsafing to his Sinful Creatures.

You read There too of the extraordinary Delight and Satisfaction expressed by Simeon, a just, devout, and inspired Israelite, when he held in his Arms the Saviour of the World, being then but eight Days old : How he prayed to God, in that pious Hymn, which We still repeat in our Churches, that He might not outlive the Day, in which his Eyes had *seen the Salvation of the Lord ; The Light to lighten the Gentiles ; and the Glory of his People Israel* : For he thought himself arrived at the highest Pitch of Human Happiness, as He could then
go

go down to his Grave with a full Assurance of a joyful Resurrection.

We see too how Cornelius, the first of the Gentiles, who was lightened by that Light from Heaven, *called together his Kinsmen, and near Friends*, to hear the Good News, which Peter was sent to tell him; and how he *magnified God* when he heard it. For he too was *a devout Man, One who feared God with all his House, and gave much Alms to the People*.

And certainly, Such Men, as He, and Simeon are represented to have been, can never reflect without Gladness of Heart, upon the unparalleled Love and Kindness of God to Mankind in the Effects of the Christian Revelation. They will rejoice in seeing the Penalty of an Eternal Death, a Death without Resurrection, which followed the Disobedience of their first Parent, abolished by
the

the Se
knowi
perfect
either
promis
to enab
will re
Assuran
all of I
sincere
Joy wil
and full
of God
Heaven
rewardin
of a tra
of a ble
It is
dant Re
Revelati

DISCOURSE V. 91

the Second Adam : They will rejoice in knowing the Will of God so much more perfectly than it was ever known before, either to Gentile, or to Jew ; and in the promised Assistance of his Holy Spirit to enable Them to perform it : They will rejoice too in that most merciful Assurance, which God has given Us all of Pardon upon Faith in Christ, and sincere Repentance : But above all their Joy will be *unspeakable*, as St. Peter says, *and full of Glory*, in the infinite Bounty of God in making Them joint Heirs of Heaven with Christ their Saviour, and rewarding the poor, imperfect Services of a transitory Life, with the Pleasures of a blessed Eternity.

It is plain then that there was abundant Reason for calling the Christian Revelation by the Name of Gospel, or
Good

92 DISCOURSE V.

Good News. So it now only remains to enquire,

Thirdly,

Why it is called so with respect to the Poor in particular, being represented as an Information so advantageous to Them, that It is ranked, not only by the Prophet *Isaiah*, but by our Saviour too Himself, amongst Those distinguishing Marks of the Messiah, The making the *Lame* walk, the *Lepers* clean, the *Deaf* to hear, and the *Dead* to live.

Now besides those General Benefits accruing to all Mankind, and consequently to the Poor as much as to the Rich, which I have above set forth, They, the Poor, seem to have a peculiar Cause of Joy, and Gratitude in respect to the following Particulars.

1. The

1. Jewi
costly
Journ
Jerusa
home,
Dwelli
ship,
Passion
the Sac
lastly (of *Isaiah*
no long
which is
That, w
parative
(that is
pel) wit
2. A
Poor is,
that is n

DISCOURSE V. 93

1. The first is, that, Whereas the Jewish Religion was burthened with costly Sacrifices, and laborious annual Journeys from all Parts of Judea to Jerusalem; That of Christ is brought home, in a manner, to Every Man's Dwelling; consists in a spiritual Worship, the offering up of the Corrupt Passions of the Heart to God, instead of the Sacrifice of Bulls and of Goats; and lastly (to speak in the Prophetick Style of Isaiah) that the Christian Poor need no longer *spend their money for That, which is not Bread, and their Labour for That, which satisfieth not; but may* (comparatively) *buy, and eat, Wine and Milk* (that is the Spiritual Food of the Gospel) *without Money, and without Price.*

2. A second Particular Profit to the Poor is, that in the Gospel of Christ all that is necessary to Salvation is contained

ed in a few easy, and intelligible Precepts, suited to the Capacity, and Knowledge of Those, who have had no Learned Education, but must trust to pure unimproved Reason for comprehending the Rules and Extent of their Duty : Whereas in the other System of Religion There was such a Multitude of difficult Observances superadded to the Moral Law, that it required much Time, and Application to understand, and fix Them in the Memory.

3. A Third Benefit to the Poor consists in the Principal and Distinguishing Doctrine of Christianity, I mean that of Charity ; In one Branch of which, the Duty of Alms, and such other Assistances, as Riches can afford to Poverty, the indigent and necessitous Members of Human Society are more particularly concerned : And it cannot but give Them

the

the high
strongly
the Gos
our Reli
is given
Conditio
Declarat
Cup of C
(that is,
to Christ
Poor) sha

4. A F
red from
Saviour,
Him Litt
quence o
shall mak
Condition
Neighbour
for how
many mor

the highest Comfort to observe how strongly this Virtue is recommended in the Gospel by the Charitable Author of our Religion, and what Encouragement is given to All Those, who are in a Condition to exercise it, by his gracious Declaration, that, *whoever shall give a Cup of Cold Water to drink, in his Name,* (that is, for his sake) *to Those who belong to Christ* (the Religious and Virtuous Poor) *shall not lose his Reward.*

4. A Fourth Advantage may be inferred from that Declaration of our Blessed Saviour, that *To Whom Little is given, of Him Little shall be required.* In consequence of which, when the Poor Man shall make the Comparifon of his own Condition, with that of his Wealthy Neighbour, and shall have confidered for how many more Duties, and how many more Capacities, and Opportunities

96 DISCOURSE V.

ties of performing Them, Those in higher Circumstances of Life are accountable; and with how great a Stewardship God hath intrusted Them; recollecting at the same Time what is said in the Gospel of the extreme Difficulty attending their Salvation; He will hardly be tempted to envy such a dangerous Pre-eminence, or wish to exchange his own *one* only *Talent*, for the *Ten* committed to the Rich Man's Care, and Improvement.

5. Another Consideration is that Equality amongst all the Children of God, which is established by the Gospel. There Those of the lowest Condition may learn, to their Comfort, that in Christ Jesus there is neither Master nor Servant, neither Rich nor Poor, neither Learned nor Unlearned: But all have an equal Share in the Benefit of his Death,

Death
Sight,
Merit
that w
Judgm
vain a
levelled
Cottage
God, v
Wealth
the mo
Earth.

6. TH
to anot
in *Spiri*
Christian
our Savi
For The
last and
Christian
They too

DISCOURSE V. 97

Death and Resurrection. For in his Sight, the only Standard of Human Merit is Faith, and Obedience. So that when We all appear before his Judgment Seat, They will see these vain and empty Worldly Distinctions levelled, and that the Poorest Virtuous Cottager will receive that Honour from God, which will be refused to the Wealthiest Wicked Subject, and to the most Powerful Tyrants of the Earth.

6. This Consolation belongs likewise to another Species of Poor, *the Poor in Spirit*, those meek and humble Christians, of whom (as is declared by our Saviour) *is the Kingdom of Heaven*. For They too have their Share in this last and greatest Advantage, of the Christian Revelation, to the Poor; since They too are assured of a full and everlasting

G

lasting Compensation, in a better World, for all They shall have suffered in This; Whether it be Hunger and Thirst; or Cold and Nakedness; or Contempt and Oppression. All these Things will be undoubtedly considered, and allowed their due Weight, in the final Account, by the just and impartial Judge. It is Then that the cruel Sufferings of Martyrs; the Patience of the Pious Christian in bearing the Scoffs and Derisions of the Ungodly; the hard, and unceasing Labour of the Lower Ranks of Life, (where They have not been Themselves wanting in their Service to God, and to such Offices of Charity to their Brethren as They were capable of;) and the conscientious Discharge of their Duty by Servants, more especially under hard and unreasonable Masters; will have an ample
Recom-

DISCOURSE V. 99

Recompense: And They will all have reason to remember, with Joy and Gladness, that gracious Assurance of their Benevolent Saviour, that They, *who mourn here, shall be comforted Hereafter.*

DISCOURSE V

And they will all have
a part in the kingdom of
God. And this is the
will of God, that all
men should be saved.

And this is the
will of God, that all
men should be saved.

And this is the
will of God, that all
men should be saved.

And this is the
will of God, that all
men should be saved.

And this is the
will of God, that all
men should be saved.

And this is the
will of God, that all
men should be saved.

D

God
Go
qui
Ma
Go

T

Happ
quiry
sifted,
of ob
both
endless
some
ject of

DISCOURSE VI.

MICAH vi. 8.

God hath shewed Thee, O! Man, what is Good: And what doth the Lord require of Thee, but to do Justly; to love Mercy; and to walk humbly with thy God?

THE great End of all the Desires, and Endeavours of the Human Race being *Good*, or Happiness, It has been a constant Enquiry amongst Men, wherein *That* consisted, and what were the surest Means of obtaining it. But, with regard to both those Points, there has been an endless Variety of Mistakes; whilst some have been searching for the object of their Wishes where It was not

102 DISCOURSE VI.

to be found, and Others, though knowing where it was placed, have been labouring to get Possession of it by Wrong Methods.

Of the Former Sort are Those, who have understood their Happiness to consist in the Wealth, or Power, or Pleasures, or Praise, or Wisdom of this World: Of the Latter Such, who considering God Almighty to be, as He indeed is, the only Giver of Happiness, both Now, and Hereafter, have sought to gain his Favour by false Persuasions, and indifferent, or insufficient, or even criminal Performances. In the first Class We may rank, with scarce any Exception, the whole Heathen World: In the Last, such of the Jews, who trusted to the Sacrifices of Beasts and Birds, and the other Ceremonial Observances of their Law, and to Them only, to make Them

DISCOURSE VI. 103

Them acceptable in the Sight of God; and all Such Christians, as place their Hope of Salvation in any Thing besides sincere Faith, and Obedience.

The inspired Writer, from Whom the Words above quoted are taken, seems to have had in his View this Deception, which Men in general, and Those of his own Country, the Jewish Nation, in particular, put upon Themselves, with respect either to the true End of their Pursuits, or the true Ways of Succeeding in Them. He supposes the great Object of Those, who sacrificed the Fruits of the Earth, the Beasts of the Field, and even their own Children, to be the Favour of the Deity:

“Wherewith (says He) will the Lord
“be pleased, with Thousands of Rams,
“or Ten Thousands of Rivers of Oyl?
“Shall I give my Firstborn for my

104 DISCOURSE VI.

“ Transgression ; The Fruit of my Bo-
 “ dy for the Sin of my Soul ? ” But
 he lets Them know, in the next Verse,
 that though they might judge rightly of
 the Object, They mistook the Means—
 That God has shewn Us *What is Good*,
 viz. Wherein our true Happiness con-
 sists, Namely in *Pleasing Him*:—and
 then proceeds to acquaint Them with
 the Right Way of *Pleasing Him*, which
 is by complying with what he requires:
 By *Doing Justly—Loving Mercy—and*
Walking Humbly with God.

I will not enter farther into what con-
 cerns either Heathen, or Jew, in this
 Admonition of the Prophet ; since the
 Former, as having only the dim Light
 of Nature, and some obscured Tradi-
 tions, for his Guides ; and the Lat-
 ter, with no better than Temporal Pro-
 mises from Above, and with a high
 Opinion

DISCOURSE VI. 105

Opinion received from his Ancestors of the Importance of the Law of Ceremonies; might both perhaps more excuseably mistake their Way. But whether their Misunderstanding of this great Point were equally or less criminal, which must be left to the Judge of All, It is certainly, to Us Christians, who know more perfectly the Will of God, and Who are taught by the Gospel to expect Eternal Salvation from his Acceptance only, of infinite Consequence to learn the true Method of recommending Ourselves to It.

Yet so it has happened to Multitudes, perhaps to much the greater Number of the Believers in Christ, that Partly thro' the Blindness, or Wickedness of their spiritual Conductors, and Partly thro' the general Inclination of Mankind to purchase Happiness at the cheapest Rate, the

106 DISCOURSE VI.

the Right Road to Heaven has been grossly misrepresented, or mistaken; and the Traveller has been led, by the Hope of finding a shorter Way to the End of his Journey, into such By-Paths, as can never bring Him Thither at all.

Of this kind are the Pardons for Past Sins, and Licences to commit Others, sold by the Popes to Those of Their Communion: Reliance upon Priestly Absolution, without real Repentance and Amendment; and the Multiplying of Intercessors with God Almighty by the Worship of Angels; and of the Virgin Mary; and innumerable other dead Men, and Women; and even of the Wood of the Cross; in Contempt of the One only true Mediator between God and Man, Christ Jesus our Saviour.

To These may be added their Pilgrimages to the Tombs of real or pretend-

ed

ed S
of In
Absti
Days,
Masse
the D
shame
Mock
which
is belie
Morta
bargain
Mercy
wise th
Clergy
others
soned i
structed
sing G
dence,

DISCOURSE VI. 107

ed Saints, and Offerings at the Altars of Images ; Relicts worn for Charms ; Abstinences from Flesh upon certain Days, to be bought off for Money ; Masses for the Dead ; and Burying in the Dresses of Monks, and Nuns : All shameful Impositions upon Men, and Mockeries of their Maker ; By some of which the Power of the Everlasting God is believed to be lodged in the Hands of Mortals like Ourselves, who dare to bargain with his Justice, and set his Mercy to Public Sale. There is likewise the Prohibition of Marriage to the Clergy, and to many Thousands of others both Men and Women, imprisoned in their Convents, and falsely instructed to imagine that They are pleasing God by counteracting his Providence, and by Disobedience to his great Original

108 DISCOURSE VI.

Original Commandment to *increase, and multiply, and replenish the Earth.*

There is Another too, and that a most pernicious Mistake of the Way to please God, practised by the same People. I mean That of Persecution for the Sake of Difference of Opinion upon Religious Subjects. I call it a Mistake, as being persuaded that Many, through a false Zeal, have thought They were serving God by Inhumanity to his Creatures; though it must be evident to all Those, who have acquainted Themselves, as They ought, both with the Practice, and Precepts of our blessed Saviour; that even Perjury, and Blasphemy are not more repugnant to the Spirit of his Gospel, than this wicked Doctrine, the Reverse of all Charity, which authorizes the forcing of the Consciences of Men by Bodily Sufferings;
offers

DISCOURSE VI. 109

offers the Sacrifice of Moloch to the God of Israel, and teaches the ignorant Multitude to harden their Hearts against Compassion, and to dedicate the most Diabolical Cruelties to the Father of all Mercies.

We of the Reformation are happy in being delivered from such gross and wretched Delusions, and no longer finding ourselves under that worst of Famines, which is stiled by the Prophet Amos, a *Famine of the Word of God*; since We are now allowed the Use of our Bibles, and have learnt from Thence not only to place our true Happiness in the Approbation of our Maker, but to hope for that Approbation from Faith in Christ our Saviour, and our own sincere Endeavours to perform his Will; Not from any vain and insignificant Expedients of Human Contrivance; Much less

110 DISCOURSE VI.

less from the Worship of Wood and Stone; from Contradiction to his Laws; and from Cruelty to our Brethren.

It is however worth our while to examine our own Hearts with Care, that We may be assured that our Hopes of future Happiness are built upon their right Foundation, which is the Attainment of Christ for our repented and forsaken Sins, and the Promise of God's Acceptance of our imperfect (if sincere) Obedience, through Him only.

For it ought not to be concealed that Many even of Those, who have embraced and profess a purer Christianity, have substituted divers new Ways of Salvation to Those prescribed by the Gospel, and have led Others after Them into a Reliance upon the same erroneous and unprofitable Additions to the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles.

I will

DISCOURSE VI. III

I will mention some Instances of this kind too.

The First is of Those, who convert indifferent Things into Essentials, who confine Salvation to their own Sect, and to certain Modes of Thinking upon Matters of little Consequence; weakly imagining that God delights in particular Denominations, and Dresses, and Postures, and Ceremonies, to the Exclusion of all Others. This is what We properly call Superstition.

A greater and more dangerous Error is Their's, who depend upon what They stile the *imputed Righteousness* of Christ to save Them, without any Necessity of living Righteously Themselves: Who pretending to certain Inward Communications from the Spirit of God, and making Shew of a more exalted Sanctity, and a *Wisdom above what is Written*, dare

to

112 DISCOURSE VI.

to give hard Words to Moral Virtue, and vilify Obedience to the Commandment of God. But these Men rest their Hopes upon a Foundation not laid in the Gospel : For by That We are assured that the End of Christ's Coming was to *purify to Himself a People zealous of Good Works* ; and that our Happiness, or Misery in the next World will depend upon our Actions, as well as on our Faith, in This.

There are Others, who have their Reliance upon certain Arbitrary Decrees, which They suppose God Almighty to have made from all Eternity in favour of Some of his Creatures, imagining that They are Themselves in the Number of the Elect. An impious Persuasion, which ascribes Partiality to the God of Justice, and supposes Him capable of mocking poor Mortal Men with

DISCOURSE VI. 113

with an Offer of Eternal Happiness, whom yet He had before predestinated to Eternal Misery.

These are Mistakes in Point of Doctrine, and surely very hazardous Ones. There are Others in Practice, which it equally concerns Us to avoid.

One is of Those, who live as if all Religion were contained in external Acts of Worship, contenting Themselves with performing one Part of their Duty, and forgetting all the Rest. Such were the Pharisees, whom our Saviour reproached with neglecting the weightier Points of the Law, whilst They were scrupulous Observers of Things of less Consequence. And such are Those amongst Us, who come constantly to Church, join in the Publick Prayers, but give no other Proof of their Christianity. Once in a Week they seem to recollect that there

H

is

114 DISCOURSE VI.

Is a God above Them: The Remainder of their Time is spent as if there were None. They say long Prayers, and devour Widow's Houses: They say to their Redeemer, Lord, Lord, but do not his Will. But This is mocking God instead of serving Him, and will, it is to be feared, expose Them to a more severe Condemnation.

Others seem to depend upon a partial Obedience, abstaining from some Sins, and indulging Themselves in Others, These Men will not rob their Neighbour of his Money or Goods, but will make no Scruple of corrupting his Wife, or Daughter, or of taking away his Good Name by uncharitable Reflexions. They abhor Cruelty and Murther, but will leave their poor starving Neighbour to perish for want of their Relief; Or, if They do give Alms to the Poor,

They

DISCOURSE VI. 115

They will at the same Time make no Conscience of cheating, and plundering the Rich; vainly trusting that Charity will cover Dishonesty. But They would do well to remember that He that said *Thou shalt open thine Hand to the Needy*, said also, *Thou shalt not Steal*: And so of the Rest; All the Commandments of God being equally binding upon Us. For his Justice will not compound with Sinners to do This, and leave Another undone; and it cannot be too often repeated, that an uniform, universal Obedience is required at our Hands.

But the most deplorable, and fatal Error is of Those, who trust their Hopes of Salvation to a Death-bed Repentance, and flatter Themselves that They may *die the Death of the Righteous*, though They have lived the Life of Sinners. We ought not certainly to set Limits to

116 DISCOURSE VI.

the Mercies of God: But neither ought We to extend Them beyond the Warrant of Scripture, and There We shall in vain seek for any Encouragement to such a Presumption upon his Goodness. If God requires of Us a constant Performance of our Duty to the End, How can We expect He will pardon a constant Neglect of it from the Beginning? What can induce Us to imagine that the imperfect Service of an Hour should atone for the Rebellion of a whole Life? It is true that the Gospel promises the Happiness of Heaven to Repentance: But We deceive Ourselves if We think that a mere Sorrow for Sin, and a Sorrow, especially, deferred till We can sin no more, is a Gospel Repentance. To constitute This, there must be Amendment as well as Grief; and a future Righteousness to ballance past Transgressions.

DISCOURSE VI. 117

gressions. But what Room is there, in the last Minutes of Life, either for Amendment, or future Righteousness!

There are two Instances however in Holy Writ, with which some may have comforted Themselves in this Hopeless Case. The First is That of the Labourers in the Parable, who, though They came in the last Hour of the Day, to the Work of the Vineyard, yet received the same Pay with Those, who had wrought from the Morning. But They, who apply this Parable so, should consider, that the Idleness of those Labourers was not their own Fault, for the Reason of their having loitered all the Day long was, that *No Man had hired Them*. Now This is far from any Resemblance to the Case before Us. Those unhappy Christians, who have spent their best Days in Sin, cannot

118 DISCOURSE VI.

allege the same Excuse, since They have had, from their Childhood, the gracious and pressing Invitations of the Gospel to enter upon the Work of their Salvation, and have wilfully declined accepting Them.

The other Instance is what is mentioned of the *Penitent Thief*. But his Case too was extremely different. For it is not at all probable, considering that Man's Occupation, that He had ever heard the Preaching of our Saviour, and his Apostles, and that being become a Convert to his Doctrine, He had fallen back into Sin. The Truth of his Case seems to be, that He had been persuaded by what he heard and saw in those last Days of his Life, in relation to Jesus Christ. He was convinced that He was, what He claimed to be, the Son of God, and Saviour of the World; and so took

the

DISCOURSE VI. 119

the first Opportunity of declaring his Faith and Repentance. In so doing He complied with the Terms of the Gospel, which promises Forgiveness and Eternal Life to Those who Repent, and Believe: And as That was his last Action in this World, He could not afterwards forfeit his Title to the Promise. Our Saviour therefore did in effect say little more to this Penitent Thief, than what He is mentioned by St. Luke to have said to the Publican Zaccheus, upon his Confession and Repentance.—*This Day is Salvation come to this House.*

Now, if You would apply this Transaction, so, as to found any Hopes upon it of a Sinner's obtaining Paradise by a Death-bed Repentance, You must put him into the same Circumstances with this Malefactor, upon the Cross. You must suppose Him to be One, who was

120 DISCOURSE VI.

an utter Stranger to the Terms of the Gospel to the very Time of his last Illness; and One, who, upon the first hearing an Account of Christ, and his Doctrine, was immediately converted; became a true Christian; and declared his Resolution of turning to God by Faith, and Amendment of Life. But This is a Thing scarcely possible in our Days.

If, therefore, you are convinced by what you have heard, that deferring Repentance to our last Illness is a great, and most dangerous Mistake, You must acknowledge for the same Reasons that We ought not to defer it at all: No, Not a Day, nor an Hour, nor a Minute: For Who can be sure that the next Moment of Time will not be his Last; and that He shall not be removed by some Sudden, and Fatal Stroke, with a Load
of

DISCOURSE VI: 121

of unrepented Sins upon his Conscience,
into the Presence of his Judge?

A great deal more might be said upon
this copious Subject: But I hope the
above Reflexions may be sufficient to
deter Every One Here from risking their
Salvation upon an Experiment, the Suc-
cess of which, to use the gentlest Term,
is absolutely improbable; but the Mis-
carriage sure to be attended with Ever-
lasting Destruction.

DIS-

DISCOURSE VII

... upon his Conscience
... of his Justice & Integrity
... might be laid upon
... the copies of his Sermons
... they be pertinent to
... the History of the Church
... the State of the Church
... to the present Time
... the Ministry
... to be attended with
... the

DIS

D I

He be

Go

qu

Ma

Go

T

shew

enqui

was

the C

by S

pass a

that

DISCOURSE VII.

MICAH vi. 8.

He hath shewed Thee, O! Man, what is Good. And what doth the Lord require of Thee, but to do Justly; to love Mercy; and to Walk humbly with thy God!

THE Prophet seems to address to Mankind in general this Declaration, that God has shewn Us *What is Good*. He had been enquiring in the foregoing Verse, what was the Way to please God. He puts the Question Whether It was to be done by Sacrifices of any Kind: He lets them pass as insufficient: And proceeds to say that God himself has taught Us both what

124 DISCOURSE VII.

what is *Good*, and the true Method of acquiring it : Meaning evidently that the Happiness of Man consists in pleasing his Maker, and that the Way of doing That is to conform himself to those Conditions, which God himself requires at his Hands.

He then sets before Us in a very short, but comprehensive, Description, what those Conditions are,—Namely, To do *Justly* ; To love *Mercy* ; and to walk *humbly* with God.

It was my Intention, in choosing these Words of the Prophet for the Subject of a Discourse, to enter particularly into the Consideration of these three great Rules of Life. But as They have been mistaken, either wilfully, or weakly by many, and other Things, which God does not require ; and some too, which He hath absolutely forbidden, have been substituted

in

DISCOURSE VII. 125

in the Place of the Commandment, which, as the Apostle observes, is *Holy, Just, and Good*; and since Men have been taught that They may be Righteous in the Sight of God, without doing Righteousness; I thought it might be of Use to mention to you some of those dangerous Errors, which deceive them. I call Them Dangerous, because where God himself has vouchsafed to declare what will be acceptable to Him, It is impossible that Man should set up a new and different Rule without Danger of displeasing Him.

Having therefore employed the Time, at our last Sunday's Meeting, in shewing You wherein the Right Conduct of Those, who would recommend Themselves to the Divine Favour and Approbation, does not consist; I come now to examine wherein It does. And, in order
to

126 DISCOURSE VII.

to satisfy Ourselves upon a Point of such infinite Importance, We cannot well take a better Guide than this inspired Prophet, who has summed up the whole Duty of Man in a few words, and, so far as regards our moral Behaviour, speaks the same Language with the Gospel.

If a Man were to make it his Business to look round about Him, and observe what is passing amongst his Fellow Creatures, Servants of the same God, He would see Multitudes curious, and eager in their Enquiries after the best Methods of obtaining Riches, and Pleasures, and Honours, the perishable Goods of this World: He would scarcely judge by their Actions that they had any Hopes or Fears beyond their present State of Existence. Yet He would discover some, who carry their Views
farther,

D
farther,
God's
tion, an
fictions,
signation
true Fel
ploying
upon th
These M
son, as v
is the or
therefore
They are
shewn th
persuaded
God, wher
sures for E
I flatter
hear me, a
convinced

DISCOURSE VII. 127

farther, who enjoy the Blessings of God's Providence Here with Moderation, and Gratitude, or submit to Afflictions, as his Chastisements, with Resignation and Patience, expecting their true Felicity in a better State, and employing their most serious Thoughts upon the Means of attaining to It. These Men know assuredly, from Reason, as well as Revelation, that God is the only Giver of Happiness, and therefore expect it from Him only. They are desirous, as David was, to be shewn the *true Path of Life*, as being persuaded that it leads to the *Presence of God*, where is *Fullness of Joy, and Pleasures for Evermore*.

I flatter myself that All, who now hear me, are of this last Sort of People, convinced of the Necessity of obeying,
as

128 DISCOURSE VII.

as dutiful Children, their *Father which is in Heaven*; and not grudging either the Time, or Pains, which are employed in learning from the Scripture the Particulars of their Duty to Themselves, to their Neighbour, and to Him.

We will therefore now enter into the Enquiry, what those Things are, which We are told by the Prophet that God requires of Us under the first Head, Namely, *To do Justly*.

Now it is not the Manner of the Inspired Writers to set forth at length every Branch of Duty, which is comprehended under the General Precept. It is left to our own Sense, and Reason, to apply the Rule, that is given, to all the particular Cases, which may fall under it. For Instance: By the Commandment, which forbids Adultery, No good Christian doubts that all other sorts of wicked

D
wicked
When it
Witness a
understan
lunny an
lawful:—
not Steal,
tion, to d
every Sp
same Rul
of this Pr
God to do
whole Ex
Things an
strained fro
Therewith
Now th
curs under
whose Bu
Justice, e
Cases. T

DISCOURSE VII. 129

wicked Lewdness are prohibited:—

When it is said, *Thou shalt not bear false Witness against thy Neighbour*, We are to understand that all Slander, and Calumny are equally declared to be unlawful:—And He that said, *Thou shalt not Steal*, meant by that General Direction, to denounce his Displeasure against every Species of Dishonesty. By the same Rule We must interpret the Words of this Prophet that We are required by God *to do justly*. We must consider the whole Extent of that Injunction, what Things are to be Done, and what Abstained from, in order to a Compliance Therewith.

Now the first Observation that occurs under this Head relates to Those, whose Business it is to execute Public Justice, either in Civil or Criminal Cases. These are required to act with

I

Impar-

130 DISCOURSE VII.

Impartiality, and to give Sentence according to Law, and Right, without regard to any Thing but the Merits of the Case before Them. Even Charity, and Compassion must here give Way to the Strictness of Justice; for They are forbidden by the Law of God *to respect the Person of the Poor.* But this Point We have no Occasion to discuss, as Magistracy is not our Province. Yet it may happen to any Man to be chosen an Arbitrator, or Umpire in Disputes between his Companions or Neighbours; and it is therefore fit to be remembered, that the same Regard to Justice is required in the Smallest, as in the Greatest Affairs.

There is Nobody so ignorant as to want to be told, that the Refusal to pay their just Debts, and the taking of the Property of Others, either by Force, or

in

D
in any o
sent, an
Use, is
are too
will not
out a De
any Def
Sale, an
Neighbo
are Crim
He w
just in ev
If the Ri
Lamb, c
or withh
soever th
not in a C
It is a w
ry, if th
Property
that The

DISCOURSE VII. 131

in any other Manner, without their Consent, and appropriating it to their own Use, is a Sin against God. But there are too Many, who either do not, or will not know, that the Borrowing without a Design to repay; and the Concealing any Defect in a Commodity offered to Sale, and so taking Advantage of their Neighbour's Ignorance to defraud Him, are Crimes of the like Nature.

He who would be really Just, must be just in every Thing without Distinction. If the Rich Man will take the Poor Man's Lamb, or will break down his Fence, or withhold from Him any Thing whatsoever that is his Right, because He is not in a Condition to contend with Him, It is a wicked Injustice. On the contrary, if the Poor will make free with the Property of the Rich, under a Notion that They can spare it, and take their

132 DISCOURSE VII.

Goods to their own Use without Leave of the Proprietor, It is equally Criminal.

If a Master shall refuse paying to his Servant the Wages due to Him, and put him to the Charge of recovering Them by Law, He is guilty of a Breach of the Commandment: And so is that Servant too, who is a Squanderer of his Master's Goods, careless and negligent of the Things put under his Care, and who does not regard his Interest as his own.

• But there are other Things besides Those of mere Property and Debt, whereby a Man may grievously injure his Neighbour. He may rob him of the Happiness of his Life by seducing his Wife, or Children, or Servants from their Love or Duty to Him. He may blast his Reputation, on which his Livelihood,

lyhood
present
cumsta
by a
are ver
In g
any me
his own
Value t
good C
take fro
of the
his Life
suasions,
Him of
science,
of God.

It is n
particula
is one U
tions bet

DISCOURSE VII. 133

lyhood, and Credit depend, by Misrepresentation of his Behaviour, or Circumstances; and destroy his good Name by a malicious Whisper. These too are very sinful Acts of Dishonesty.

In general, to deprive Another by any means of what He may justly call his own; or to make it wilfully of less Value to Him; To lessen Him in the good Opinion of the World, and to take from Him, against his Will, any of the Comforts, or Conveniencies of his Life; and above all, by your Persuasions, or ill Example, to plunder Him of his Innocence, and Good Conscience, are crying Iniquities in the Sight of God.

It is not possible to enumerate every particular Kind of Injustice: But there is one Universal Rule in the Transactions between Man and Man, by which

134 DISCOURSE VII.

Whosoever will resolve to conduct Himself, may be assured of *Doing Justly*. The Rule is This, That We should do unto Others what We should wish Them, in the like Case, to do unto Us. Let a Man consider, when he is tempted to over-reach, or cheat his Neighbour, whether it be in the Payment of Rents, or Tithes, or any other just Debts; or in any Bargain or Sale; Or to rob; or backbite; or to do him any other Damage of any kind; how He should like to be treated Himself in the same Manner, and let him act accordingly; There will then be no Danger of his injuring his Fellow Creatures, and displeasing their common Lord and Master.

But there is still another Duty incumbent upon Him, who would deserve the Praise of doing *Justly*: I mean a strict

Ad-

D
Adheren
Justice.
true Qu
to the E
speaks.
Justice.
Neighbo
dent. If
it may p
Myself i
cannot b
If I lye t
have cor
Thereby
God for
proof of
perhaps
an Accid
soon as o
Under
the great

DISCOURSE VII. 135

Adherence to Truth: For Truth is Justice. A Lyar either detracts some true Quality; or adds some false One to the Person, or Thing, of which he speaks. But This is inconsistent with Justice. If my Lye be injurious to my Neighbour, the Dishonesty of it is evident. If I lye only for the sake of lying, it may possibly hurt Nobody else, But Myself it may; forasmuch as Falshood cannot be pleasing to the God of Truth. If I lye to conceal any Fault that I may have committed, I increase my Guilt Thereby; and venture to sin against God for the Sake of avoiding the Re-proof of Men; and for That, which perhaps was no more than an Error, or an Accident, and would be forgiven as soon as owned.

Under this Head must be ranged too the great Duty of adhering strictly to

136 DISCOURSE VII.

our Word and Promise, of which They, who are truly and conscientiously honest, are so sensible, that They will not, without Necessity, so much as disappoint any Hopes and Expectations, which They have knowingly raised in Others, tho' no absolute Engagement, Written, or Verbal, has been entered into on their Part.

Another Species of Justice is That, which a Man owes to himself. By which I must not be understood to mean that arrogant Temper of Mind, which disposes many People to justify their Character by ill Language, or Blows, or any Kind of Revenge: Much less the corrupt Fashion amongst People of higher Rank, which, in Defiance of the Law of God, allows Men to demand Satisfaction, at the Point of the Sword, for every Thing, which They interpret

an

D

an Affr
own Li
but thei
what is
Practice
himself
takes th
out of
wherein
and dar
destroy t
blished i
the true
I before
To p
exact Pre
tion, and
sume any
which ou
Not to
good Op

DISCOURSE VII. 137

an Affront; and to risk, not only their own Lives, and the Lives of Others, but their Salvation too, in Support of what is falsely called Honour. These Practices, by which every Man makes himself the Judge in his own Case, and takes the Power of redressing Injuries out of the Hands of the Magistrate, wherein God has lodged it, are an open and daring Disobedience to Him, and destroy the Order, which He has established in the World: Neither is This the true Justice, which every Man, as I before mentioned, owes to Himself.

To perform That, is to act in an exact Proportion to our State and Situation, and true Deservings: Not to assume any Power over our own Lives, which our Maker has not given Us: Not to expect a greater Share of the good Opinion, and Respect of Others, than

138 DISCOURSE VII.

than We know We are entitled to ; but to be content to pass for What We really are ; Nay and for What We are Not ; rather than to resent an Abuse by unjust, and sinful Methods : Not taking to Ourselves false Merits, and undue Commendations, but being ready to acknowledge our own Imperfections, and pay the proper Deference to our Superiors, and Betters in any Kind. In these Respects Meakness, and Humility are but other Names for Justice.

But in another View also, it behoves Us to be just to Ourselves. It is our Duty to consider the Dignity of that Nature, which God has given Us, and to follow the Dictates of our Reason, which distinguishes Us from the Brute Creation. If We pollute Ourselves with unlawful Lusts, destroy our Health, and weaken the Powers of our Mind by

Glut-

DI

Gluttony

are Guilty

We emp

which Go

in Uses,

tended, a

our Trust

and less w

which wa

of the Mi

Souls, by

wilful Vio

that Etern

graciously

The L

which I sh

wards God

We may b

certaining

Divine Na

tendly, B

DISCOURSE VII. 139

Gluttony, Drunkenness, or Sloth, We are Guilty of great Injustice to ourselves: We employ the Time, and Talents, which God has committed to our Care, in Uses, for which They were not intended, and consequently are false to our Trust: We spend upon our inferior, and less worthy Part, the Body, That, which was given for the Improvement of the Mind, and sin against our own Souls, by robbing Them, through a wilful Violation of the Laws of God, of that Eternal Inheritance, which He most graciously had prepared for them.

The Last, and Highest Instance, which I shall Mention, is of Justice towards God himself; for to Him also We may be unjust. As, *first*, by entertaining unworthy Thoughts of his Divine Nature and Attributes: And, *secondly*, By not acting towards Him

con-

140 DISCOURSE VII.

conformably to the Relations, in which he stands to Us.

An Example or two of the first Kind of Injustice towards God I mentioned in my last Discourse, when I spoke of some Christians, who ascribe to His Divine Majesty Things inconsistent with his infinite Justice and Goodness; such as decreeing a great Part of his Creatures from all Eternity, that is, innumerable Millions of Ages before He made Them, to Everlasting Misery: And Being delighted with the Cruelty exercised by Men upon their Brethren for Differences in Opinion. And I may now add Another like Instance of Injustice to the Deity, in supposing Him capable of condemning New-born Infants, who cannot have offended Him, to Eternal Torments. Of this Species of Injustice too, All are guilty, who represent the God

DI

of Mercy
and dispr
Servants,
He has not
to the Cr
any kind
whatsoever
foolishly,
an One a
would do
in their T
under tha
pleased to
the xxxiv
the Lord
claimed the
and Gracior
ant in God
Mercy for
and Transgr

of

DISCOURSE VII. 141

of Mercy as a hard Master, laying heavy and disproportioned Burthens upon his Servants, and expecting to *reap where He has not sown*: And Those who impute to the Creator, and Father of all Men, any kind of Partiality; or Who, in whatsoever other Respect, *charge God foolishly*, and think Him to be *even such an One as Themselves*. Those, who would do true Justice to God Almighty in their Thoughts, must look upon him under that Description, which he was pleased to give of Himself to Moses in the xxxivth chapter of Exodus, When *the Lord passed by before Him, and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, Merciful, and Gracious, Long-Suffering, and Abundant in Goodness, and in Truth; Keeping Mercy for Thousands; Forgiving Iniquity, and Transgression, and Sin.*

The

142 DISCOURSE VII.

The second Instance is our acting conformably to the Relations, in which We stand to God. "A Son honoureth his Father, and a Servant his Master. If then I be a Father, where is mine Honour? If I be a Master, where is my Fear? *saieth the Lord of Hosts.*" (Malachi i. 6.) In these two Capacities, and as our Creator too, and Benefactor, and Judge, We must consider our God, if We would *do justly* in regard to Him. We must love, reverence, adore, and fear to offend Him. We must *go into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise*, behaving in all Things as Those, who *live and move, and have their Being in Him*; as his Creatures, his Subjects, his Servants, and his Children.

But

DISCOURSE VII. 143

But as these Considerations will fall more properly in my Way, when I came to speak to that part of the Text, which requires Us to *walk humbly with our God*, I must defer what I have further to observe upon it, to another Occasion.

D I S-

DISCOURSE VII. 143

But as these Considerations will still
propose in my Way, when I
begin to speak to that part of the Text,
which requires Us to seek humbly after
God, I must defer what I have for-
merly observ'd upon it to another Oc-

DIS

God bath

Good :

quire o

Mercy

God ?

I Have
this
upon

what Dut

General I

Walking k

The M

quired to

practise, i

Charity in

DISCOURSE VIII.

MICAH vi. 8.

God hath shewed Thee, O! Man, what is Good: And what doth the Lord require of Thee, but to do Justly; to love Mercy; and to walk humbly with thy God?

I Have gone through the first Part of this Text in my former Discourses upon it. It remains now to consider, what Duties are contained under the two General Precepts of *Loving Mercy, and Walking humbly with God.*

The Mercy, which We are here required to love, and consequently to practise, is the same with what is called Charity in the Gospel, which We must

K not

146 DISCOURSE VIII.

not understand as confined to the Relief of the Necessities of the Poor, though That is indeed a great Branch of it; but as extended to the whole Race of Mankind; Rich as well as Poor; Strangers as well as Acquaintance; Foreigners as well as Countrymen; Enemies, no less than Friends: To People of different Persuasions in Religion from our Own; To the Wicked, and Those, who shew Themselves no Charity: Nay even to our Revilers, Persecutors, and Murderers. All These may be shewn, from the Doctrine, and Practice of our Saviour, to be Objects of that true Mercy, and perfect Charity, which it is our Duty to exercise.

It is of great Consequence to Us all to be rightly informed in this Matter, since the Mercy or Charity above described is so essential to our Future Happiness,

pinefs,
to the C
our Un
Faith,
feed th
Bodies
Thing.
The
versal L
itself in
and Libe
and Opp
in Wishe
of so hig
self is pro
inasmuch
upon the U
penses the
Men, and
Happiness

DISCOURSE VIII. 147

piness, that, according to St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, Without That, neither our Understanding, nor Knowledge, nor Faith, nor Bestowing all our Goods to feed the Poor, nor even giving our Bodies to be burned, will avail Us any Thing.

The Charity of the Gospel is an Universal Love, and Benevolence, exerting itself in Actions of Regard, Compassion, and Liberality, where it has the Power, and Opportunity, and, where it has not, in Wishes, and Prayers. It is a Virtue of so high a Rank, that even God himself is proposed to Us as a Pattern of it, inasmuch as He *maketh his Sun to shine upon the Unjust*, as well as the Just; dispenses the Blessings of Nature to All Men, and has prepared an Eternity of Happiness for All, who will qualify
K 2 Them-

148 DISCOURSE VIII.

Themselves for it by following the Example of his Charity.

The next Instance is That of our most compassionate Redeemer, who condescended to endure the Contradiction and Contempt of Sinners in his Life, and their Injustice and Cruelty in his Death, in order to their Salvation; offering an Excuse for their Wickedness even in the midst of the Tortures of his Cross; and beseeching God to grant Them that Mercy, which They did not shew to Him.

A great and exalted Charity was That likewise of the Apostles of Christ, who, for the Sake of publishing to all Mankind the Glorious Promises of the Gospel, submitted voluntarily to Bonds and Imprisonments; to Mockery, and Scourgings; and to various Kinds of Death.

We read of Others too, who have testified their Love to Mankind by exposing

D
posing
ferings
or sacri
Benefit
or their
But
such pa
our Bre
Let U
to such
to Comm
Few of
so much
Now,
should b
Lives for
try, or f
Fellow C
of Self-I
venience,

DISCOURSE VIII. 149

posing Themselves to Dangers, and Sufferings; and of Many, who have risked or sacrificed their Lives purely for the Benefit of their Relations, their Friends, or their Country.

But it may not be our Lot to give such painful Proofs of our Affection to our Brethren.

Let Us therefore turn our Thoughts to such Deeds of Charity as are incident to Common Life. I will only mention a Few of Those, which are not generally so much attended to.

Now, though neither You, nor I should be called upon to hazard our Lives for our Friends, or for our Country, or for the Service of any of our Fellow Creatures, yet there are Instances of Self-Denial, or Labour, or Inconvenience, to which it may be often our

K 3

Duty

150 DISCOURSE VIII.

Duty to submit for their Sakes. A Charitable Man will frequent *the House of Mourning*, where he can administer Comfort : He will visit the Sick, if his Assistance can be of Use : Or, like the good Samaritan, bind up the Sores of the Wounded. These Things are indeed unpleasant, often shocking to Human Nature ; But They are a Part of our Duty to perform, whenever We can be of Service to our Neighbour in Distress. And so it is, to abridge our own Enjoyments, and part with some of the Comforts of our own Life, to make his less miserable, if We cannot otherwise do it.

These Instances of Brotherly Kindness oblige the Poor as well as the Rich. It would be a great Mistake to imagine that He that receives Alms from Others, is exempted from the Duties of Charity himself.

DISCOURSE VIII. 151

self. He may, and therefore ought, to exercise it in several Kinds. In some of Those particularly, which I have just mentioned. Besides which He may have other Opportunities of doing good to his Neighbours. He may acquaint Them with any Thing likely to do Them Prejudice, which comes to his Knowledge. If Wrong is done Them, and He is acquainted with the Author of it, He may discover Him to Them. If the Ox or Ass either of his Friend or Enemy go astray, He may obey a Commandment of God, in helping to bring Them back : and so in many other Particulars.

The truly Benevolent Man will not only give Cloaths to the Naked, Food to the Hungry, Medicines to the Sick, and Lodgings to the benighted Travel-
 lers : But will, as far as in his Power,

152 DISCOURSE VIII.

be Eyes to the Blind, Ears to the Deaf, and Feet to the Lame. He will grudge neither his Expence, nor his Time, nor his Pains to the Relief of the Distressed. He will not be scrupulous, when an Occasion offers of doing Good, in examining into the Moral Character, or the Sect, or the Country, or the Party of the Object: Being a Man himself, He will rejoice in assisting Human Nature; and, though He will think Himself justified in giving the Preference to the Religious, and Virtuous Poor, yet He will not judge any of Those, whom the same God has created, and the same Saviour died to redeem, below his Notice, or unworthy of his good Offices.

Upon the same Principle if he sees any Damage doing to Another's Property in his Absence, He will act as if it were his own Case: If he meets a Stranger

D

Stranger
will set
Neighbour
his Per
Part: I
lence, I
He will
and, so f
himself,
Person,
even Tho
to Other
Neighbour
Publick
envying
Thing H
pining at
note it to
rejoice sin
But th
owe to th

DISCOURSE VIII. 153

Stranger going out of his Way, He will set him right: If he hears his Neighbour's Actions misrepresented, or his Person vilified, He will take his Part: If he sees him attack'd by Violence, He will go to his Assistance. He will abhor Calumny, and Scandal; and, so far from spreading false Reports, himself, to the Prejudice of a Third Person, He will forbear to propagate even Those that are true, by telling Them to Others; for He will wish that his Neighbour's Disgrace may be as little Publick as possible: And, instead of envying Another's Good Success in any Thing He may have in View, and repining at his Happiness, He will promote it to the utmost of his Power, and rejoice sincerely in it.

But there is a Charity, which We owe to the Souls of Each Other, as well

154 DISCOURSE VIII.

as Bodies. Mutual Admonitions, and Reproofs are recommended by the Apostle, that We may be kept steady in the Way of Righteousness. A Conscientious Man, whose principal Ambition is to please God, will receive this Good Office with Thankfulness. But by too many our Kindness would be rejected with Scorn: Perhaps worse. These are the Swine mentioned by our Saviour, before which, He forbids Us, to cast our Pearl: The Dogs to whom We are not to give That which is Holy, lest They turn again, and rent Us. And certainly We are not obliged to force our Advice upon obstinate, irreclamable, dangerous Sinners. But there are Objects Enough, from whom No such Thing is to be apprehended. Parents may, and ought to reprimand their Children, and Superiors, in general, their

D
their I
guilty o
or Negl
rity to a
to repro
pay for
him dri
fions to
Anger w
pent of.
There
tion from
give it,
ceiving
where S
and the
hardened
The g
Hearts a
to the I
Happine

DISCOURSE VIII. 155

their Inferiors, when They see Them guilty of any Immorality, or Irreligion, or Neglect of Duty. It is a great Charity to a Common Swearer and Curser to reprove his Impiety, and make him pay for it: To a Drunkard to refuse him drink; and to Men of violent Passions to prevent their doing in their Anger what They would afterwards repent of.

There is also the Charity of Instruction from Those, who are qualified to give it, to such as are desirous of receiving it: The Charity of Reward, where Such Encouragement is wanted: and the Charity of Punishment to more hardened Natures.

The great Point is to cherish in our Hearts a sincere Desire of contributing to the Eternal, as well as Temporal Happiness of our Brethren. Where
That

156 DISCOURSE VIII.

That is, there will be also suitable Endeavours to promote it, and the Means of gratifying, in one Shape or another, so laudable an Ambition will undoubtedly not be wanting to any of Us.

I have reserved for the last Instance of this great Duty of loving and practising Mercy One towards Another, That of Mutual Forgiveness, because it deserves to be distinguished, as a Thing so peculiarly essential to our Salvation, that our Saviour gives Us no Hopes of being forgiven our own Trespases against God, but upon Condition of our forgiving Them, who trespass against Us. And This is our Daily Prayer. It behoves Us therefore to be extremely attentive to what passes in our own Hearts upon occasion of receiving any Affront, or Injury, or Provocation whatsoever, lest We deceive Ourselves, and say *Peace where there is in truth no Peace.*

It

DI

It is
People,
that The
get it.
their Po
done; B
Trespas.
blance of
stead of
mandmen
their Bro
any Degr
the least
to befrien
Them, a
Their Re
Their Ex
to their c
ed. We
Minds th
that Veng

DISCOURSE VIII. 157

It is no uncommon Thing to hear People, who have been ill used, declare that They can forgive, but cannot forget it. And indeed it may not be in their Power to forget it as a Thing done; But They must forget it as a Trespass. For a mere external Semblance of Forgiveness is a Mockery, instead of a Compliance with the Commandment: And if They remember their Brother's Sin against Them with any Degree of Inward Resentment, bear the least Ill Will, and are not as ready to befriend the Person who has offended Them, as They were before the Offence, Their Reconciliation is not sincere, nor Their Expectation of Pardon from God to their own Transgressions well founded. We ought to bear always in our Minds that Declaration in God's Law, *that Vengeance belongeth to Him*, so that

We

158 DISCOURSE VIII.

We are not to take it Ourselves, but leave it to the Judge of all. There is Nothing certainly more expressly nor strongly condemned in the Gospel than Private Resentment, and Retaliation. He therefore that finds his Temper inclinable to the forbidden Pleasure of Revenge, must labour to subdue it, lest he should be found, in the End, to have punished the Crimes committed against Him upon Himself: And He cannot too often reflect upon that Saying of our Blessed Saviour, after having told Us, in the Parable, that the unmerciful Servant was delivered by his Master to the Tormentors.—“ So likewise shall my
 “ Heavenly Father do unto You, if
 “ You, *from your Hearts*, forgive not
 “ Every One his Brother (that is, Every
 “ One who hath offended you) their
 “ Trespasses.”

I will

DISCOURSE VIII. 159

I will but just mention the Obligation We are under to treat the Brute Creation, which God has subjected to Us for our Use, with Gentleness and Compassion. We have indeed a Right to their Labour, and to their Lives, but None to put Them to the least unnecessary Pain. It is said somewhere in Scripture, that *the Righteous Man regardeth the Life of his Beast*. And surely That Mind which can delight in the Sufferings of a poor helpless Animal, must be lost to every Sentiment of Virtue, as well as Humanity: To inflict Them upon any of Those, whose Flesh We feed on, for the Gratification of a depraved Appetite, is adding the Guilt of Cruelty to That of Intemperance: And to treat with Barbarity those particular Kinds to whose Labour We are indebted, seems an Ingratitude both to the Creator, and
the

160 DISCOURSE VIII.

the Creature. We are told by St. James that, *He that has shewed no Mercy, shall have Judgment without Mercy*: and I see no Reason to think that Cruelty to other Living Creatures, as well as That to our own Species, may not have it's Share in the same just Condemnation. For since We are commanded by Jesus Christ to imitate the infinite Compassion of God, *whose Mercy is, not over Man alone, but over all his Works*; It cannot be doubted that Every Kind of Hard-heartedness, and Inhumanity, must render Us Objects of his displeasure.

The Last of the Three Things said by the Prophet to be required of Us, was to *walk humbly with our God*.

Now the Observations, which occur to me under this Head are the Following.

That Men should consider the Relation wherein They stand to God, as his
Creatures

DISCOURSE VIII. 161

Creatures first, and Then as sinful Creatures ; and the Obligations, which arise from Thence ; since Those who are wanting to the Duties, which belong to such a Situation, cannot be said to walk humbly with their God.

It is a great Point of Virtue, as well as Mark of Good Sense, for a Man to know Himself, and to act according to what He is, not according to what He is not.

We know, and are very sure that it was *the Lord, who made Us, and not We Ourselves* ; and We learn from the Scripture of what Materials We were composed ; that We had no better Original than the Dust of the Ground, as to our Bodies ; and that whatever Beauty, or Strength, or Understanding We enjoy ; whatever Blessings We are in Possession of Here, or hope for Hereafter, are the

L

Gifts

162 DISCOURSE VIII.

Gifts of his free Bountty. The natural Consequence of this Reflection is, that We should humble Ourselves before our Great Creator, that We should by continual Thanksgivings acknowledge his infinite, undeserved Goodness, and lose no Opportunity of imploring the Continuance of his mighty Protection. Whoever has these Truths impressed, as They ought to be, upon his Mind, and considers that He cannot live an Hour, or a Minute but by God's Permission, will hardly venture either to begin, or end any Day of his Life, without raising his Thoughts to Heaven, acknowledging in devout Praises all his past Mercies, and recommending himself, and all that belong to Him, to the same good Providence for the future. He will think it Ingratitude to God to absent Himself either from the Church,

or

or from
numbe
well as
his Wo
to perfe
cious M
Such
the Deli
Innocen
sinned in
his Law
there are
bent. T
Miscond
and Ing
tismal V
beg his
tance th
with the
that infi

DISCOURSE VIII. 163

or from the Sacrament; and will find numberless Occasions, in Company, as well as alone; at Home, or Abroad; at his Work, as well as in his leisure Hours; to perform a silent Worship to his gracious Maker and Preserver.

Such would be the Practice, and such the Delight of Man even in a State of Innocence: But upon Those, who have sinned in the Sight of God, and broken his Laws, (as Who of Us all has not!) there are, besides, other Duties incumbent. To lament, and bewail our past Misconduct; to detest our Rebellion, and Ingratitude; to renew our Baptismal Vows of Obedience; and to beg his Acceptance of our Repentance through Christ our Saviour, with the heartiest Thanksgiving for that infinite Mercy, which God has

164 DISCOURSE VIII.

vouchsafed to Us in the Promise of Pardon through him.

We shall remember too, if We are truly sensible of our own Insignificance, and Unworthiness, and of all that We owe to the Grace and Goodness of our Creator, that, if We would in Truth *walk humbly with God*, We must walk humbly with Man also. We read in the Proverbs of Solomon, that *Every one, that is proud in Heart, is an Abomination to the Lord*. There are Few in the World, who have not, in one Respect or another, some Inferiors: Perhaps, None, who do not think They have Many. This Kind of Vanity is a Weakness of Human Nature: But of which, Those who have it, may make an Advantage to Themselves, if They will use that Superiority, real or imaginary, as They ought; Behaving

to

DISCOURSE VIII: 165

to Those under, or below Them, with Humility, and Condescension, and Kindness; not forgetting that they are their Brethren; Servants of the same God; redeemed by the same great Sacrifice of his Son; and to meet hereafter together, without any other Distinction besides That of Blessed, or Cursed, before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

If on the contrary, the Prince shall treat his Subjects here on Earth as Slaves; the Master his Servants as mere Beasts of Burthen; They forget that They too have a King and Master, in Heaven. If the Rich and High-born behave to the Poor with Neglect, or Insolence; and the Learned, or Well-bred look down upon the plain, uneducated Christian with Haughtiness and Contempt; They may chance to despise a Man, whom their common Judge will honour. And it

166 DISCOURSE VIII.

is to be feared They will be found in the end to have *walked* arrogantly not *humbly with their God*; will all know, when it is too late, that They have converted those Gifts of his Bounty, upon which They pride Themselves, into a Snare; and may expect an Abasement hereafter, proportionable to the Abuse of their present Exaltation.

Those, who are so happy as to have thought Seriously on their Ways, and to have brought their Spirit into such Subjection, as to deserve in general the Character of walking humbly both with God, and Man, have still one Danger to avoid, which is being puffed up, and making a Shew of their own Perfections: For there is a spiritual Pride too, which consists in Pretences to a superior Religion and Virtue: and there are Men amongst Us, who seem proud

even

even
cerely
tian, i
Hope
whilst
Examp
and to
great I
last Da
that Th

DISCOURSE VIII. 167

even of their Humility. But the sincerely humble and truly pious Christian, is contented and happy in a just Hope of the Approbation of his God; whilst Those, who choose to follow the Example of the ostentatious Pharisee, and to receive Honour from Men, have great Reason to fear being told, at the last Day, by the Judge of all Hearts, that *They have already had their Reward.*

DISCOURSE THE 107

...of this language. But the ...
...and truly ...
...and he ...
...of the ...
...who ...
...of the ...
...and ...
...as the ...
...by the ...
...and ...

DISCOURSE THE 108

DISCOURSE

His Life
is not
of any

Y

Men, e
severe 'i
their H
begin w
Sinners
principa
piety, t
that the

" Affe

DISCOURSE IX.

WISDOM ii. 15.

*His Life (i. e. The Life of the Righteous)
is not like other Men's. His Ways are
of another Fashion.*

YOU will find in this Chapter a very striking Representation of the Conversation of Ungodly Men, encouraging Each Other to persevere in Wickedness; and expressing their Hatred of the Righteous. They begin with that Common Imposition of Sinners upon their own Consciences, that principal Article in the Creed of Impiety, that there is no Life after Death; that their “ Body shall be turned into
“ Ashes, their Spirit vanish as the Air;
that

“ that their Time is a very Shadow which
 “ passeth away; and that after their
 “ End there is no Returning” to Life.
 “ Come on therefore (say They) Let no
 “ one of Us go without his Part of our
 “ Voluptuousness :” That is, Let Us
 indulge our Appetites to the utmost.
 And, that there may be no Check upon
 their Progress in Iniquity, No one to re-
 proach Them, by Word, or Example,
 with their Sin, and Folly, They add,
 “ Let Us lie in wait for the Righteous,
 “ because He is not for our Turn, and
 “ He is clean Contrary to our Doings.
 “ He upbraideth Us with our offending
 “ against the Law.—He professeth to
 “ have the Knowledge of God, and He
 “ calleth Himself the Child of God.—
 “ He is grievous unto Us even to be-
 “ hold; for his Life is not like other

“ Men’s:

D
 “ Men
 “ Fashi
 I hav
 particul
 have rea
 present
 Account
 and em
 with the
 Man, a
 which T
 to Ther
 the com
 larly Go
 It is
 that in
 ed, whi
 which t
 tify, a
 like Th
 of a diff

DISCOURSE IX. 171

“Men’s: His Ways are of another
“Fashion.”

I have chosen this Chapter, and more particularly those Verses of it, which I have read to you, for the Subject of our present Reflexions, as containing a just Account of the groundless-Consolations, and empty Pleasures of the Wicked, with their Malice against the Righteous Man, and the Motives of it; amongst which This is one of the most offensive to Them, that He dares to deviate from the common Practice, and to be singularly Good.

It is a very melancholy Consideration, that in a World, which God has created, which his Son has instructed, and which the Holy Ghost was sent to sanctify, a Life of Virtue should be still unlike That of other Men, and It’s Ways of a different Fashion. Yet so it is. And
if

if We look around Us upon the Behaviour of the Generality, now, after so many hundred Years, that have passed since the Description given by the Wise Author of this Book of the Ungodliness of his Times, We shall, I doubt, find little Reason to boast of any great and general Amendment in the Morals of Mankind.

On the contrary, We shall meet every where with Men and Women, who shew by their Conduct that They are *Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God*. We shall find Numbers of those, who (as the same Writer says in the 10th and 11th Verses) *oppress the poor Righteous Man; will not spare the Widow; nor reverence the Grey Hairs of the Aged; and who make their Strength their Law of Justice*. You will not perhaps hear Them declaring openly against a Future State:

But

But yo
ing in
Thoug

This
deratio
greatly

a true C
passiona

But it
than gri

so ma
Creatur

God; a
Underst

and free
expose T

To w
dreadful

we owe
Not sure

of the D

DISCOURSE IX. 173

But you will judge by their Way of living in this World, that They have no Thoughts of Another.

This I said was a melancholy Consideration: And Certainly, It must very greatly concern All Those, who, from a true Christian Charity, love, and compassionate the Souls of their Brethren. But it is a Thought no less surprising than grievous to the Religious Man, that so many Thousands of accountable Creatures, should reject the Mercies of God; and with their Eyes open, their Understanding unimpaired, knowingly, and freely, with Deliberation, and Choice, expose Themselves to his Vengeance.

To what then are We to ascribe this dreadful Defection from the Duty, which we owe to our Creator and Governor? Not surely to any irresistible Force, either of the Devil's Temptation, or of their
own

174 DISCOURSE IX.

own Sinful Lusts; since many do, and all may, resist both the One and the Other. If They could not, God were unjust, as He would make a Thing not in our Power the Condition of our future Happiness. But to assert That would be Blasphemy. Neither ought it to be imputed to any Superior Pleasure arising from the Ways of Ungodliness, since it is a Truth indisputable that the Delights of a good Conscience do infinitely exceed all the deceitful Enjoyments of Vice and Irreligion.

There may indeed be Some, who flatter Themselves with such false Conceits to their own Destruction, But there is a Cause, whose Effects are more extensive, and which multiplies the Servants of Sin beyond Comparison. What I mean is the Proneness of Men, and of Youth in particular, to be ruled by Example

ample
in itself
cently
even la
Ourselv
gious
People,
Things
ed, ma
tue, an
Savage,
But
Religion
troul of
it so pr
vast Num
and Sub
Fortunes
their ow
as Futur
ments of

DISCOURSE IX. 175

ample and Fashion. This seems to be, in itself, and so far as it can be Innocently complied with, a natural, and even laudable Inclination. To conform Ourselves either to the Civil, or Religious Practices, and Customs of the People, with whom We live, in all Things, where Conscience is not offended, may be justly esteemed a social Virtue, and the Contrary the Mark of a Savage, or Proud Disposition.

But Men do not stop here. Even Religion, and Virtue are under the Controul of Fashion, and the Influence of it so predominant, that You may see vast Numbers squandering their Time and Substance irretrievably, wasting the Fortunes of their Families, and risking their own Happiness, as well Present, as Future, in the dangerous Amusements of Gaming; in luxurious, vain Assemblies;

176 DISCOURSE IX.

Assemblies; and in a ruinous Emulation of their Superiors. Their Ambition is to be reputably useless to Society, and Enemies to Themselves.

You may observe Others, who neglect the Public Service of God in the Church, lest They should be thought more religious, and grave than their Neighbours. Multitudes, who drink beyond the Bounds of Sobriety, and beyond their own Liking too, in Compliance with what is called Good Company, but is in Reality the Worst: and not a Few, who are drawn, by the Prevalence of bad Example, and to obtain a scandalous Credit, into still grosser Vices.

When Drinking was out of Fashion, the Politer Part of Mankind became Sober; and, in the Days of our Fathers, when it was reckoned Ill-breeding to brag of Incontinence, The Deeds of
Dark-

Darkn
who b
Marria
and tha
is, *Tho*
the On
the T
among
where C
gageme
and the
Life up
become
receive
stead of
which i
sion of
To w
neral Pe
We sup
balance,

DISCOURSE IX. 177

Darkness were kept in Obscurity. All, who believe the Scripture, know that Marriage is the Ordonnance of God; and that Another of his Commandments is, *Thou shalt not kill*. Yet We see both the One, and the Other superseded by the Tyranny of a vicious Fashion; amongst the Higher Ranks especially; where Cohabitation without a lasting Engagement, either Religious, or Civil; and the Taking away of another Man's Life upon some slight Provocation; are become Polite Accomplishments, and receive the Applause of the World, instead of being branded with that Infamy, which is due to every wilful Transgression of the Laws of God.

To what are We to attribute this general Perversity? What Arguments can We suppose sufficiently powerful to overbalance, in the Mind of a Reasonable,

M

and

178 DISCOURSE IX.

and Accountable Being, all his Hopes from the Approbation of his Judge, and all the just Fears of his Displeasure?

It is true there are several of these Thinking Creatures, who seem to have no Thought at all either with regard to their Temporal, or their Eternal Interests, but swim down the Stream of a Popular Profligacy, without ever reflecting to what Rocks, or Quicksands it many conduct Them. They go (as the Wise Solomon very affectingly describes their Behaviour) *as an Ox goeth to the Slaughter, or a Fool to the Correction of the Stocks: They hast to the Snare till a Dart strikes through the Liver, and know not that it is for their Life.* But These must be few in Comparison. The Bulk of Fashionable Sinners shew, by their Attention to their Worldly Affairs, that They are far from wanting Reflexion, and

DISCOURSE IX. 179

and Forecast. They must have therefore some Reasons to allege for their Conduct, some at least, that quiet their Consciences, and lull Them, as it were to Sleep, in the midst of the greatest Dangers, to which Human Nature can be exposed.

Let Us consider what these Reasons may be, and what is their real Weight in the Scale.

Now there are two Instances of wrong Judgment upon this very important Matter, which, I doubt not, influence the Practice of Many.

The First is, that God Almighty will not give up so great a Number of his Creatures to Eternal Perdition, as They suppose must be the Case, if all Those shall be condemned at the last Day, who have lived loosely, and irreli-
giously in this World.

M 2

The

180 DISCOURSE IX.

The Second a false Shame, or Fear of being reproached with Singularity.

Now Those, who take Comfort from the First Supposition, deceive Themselves most absurdly, for They do in effect imagine that, as in Worldly Dangers, so in Spiritual, there is Safety in Numbers; as if God, who has declared in Holy Writ, that *the Soul, which sinneth, shall dye*, were to be deterred from executing that righteous Sentence by the Multitude of Evil Doers. They seem vainly to suppose, that the Omnipotent Maker and Lord of Heaven and Earth; He, who, (as our Saviour told the Jews) *is able from the very Stones to raise up Children to Abraham*; He, who has *a Thousand Thousands of Angels at his Right Hand, and Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand worshipping before Him*, can want means of replacing, if necessary, such Souls,

Souls,
worthy
like Ea
Kindom
Subjects
such id
God is w
that all M
Sakes, n
be put in
He dest
whole G
He had l
Disobedie
Men of t
tude to
afterward
Joshua, m
How, wh
Way over

DISCOURSE IX. 181

Souls, as have rendered Themselves unworthy of his Favour ; or can be afraid, like Earthly Princes, of weakening his Kindom by lessening the Number of his Subjects. But let Those, who cherish such idle Imaginations know, that if *God is willing*, as the Gospel assures Us, *that all Men should be saved*, It is for their Sakes, not for His own : And let Them be put in Mind, How, in antient Days, He destroyed, in the Wilderness, the whole Generation of Israelites, whom He had brought out of Egypt, for their Disobedience ; and would suffer but Two Men of that almost innumerable Multitude to *enter into his Rest*. How He afterwards extirpated, by the Sword of Joshua, many Nations of Idolaters ; and How, when all Flesh had *corrupted it's Way over the Face of the Earth*, He

182 DISCOURSE IX.

overwhelmed at once, that whole Rebellious Race in the General Deluge.

The second Motive to following the Example of Wicked Men, is the Fear of being reproached with Singularity.

If a Man can strike out any new Method of improving his Fortune, if He can increase his Worldly Wealth by quitting the Common, and Accustomed Way of Proceeding in any Case, He no longer fears this Reproach: He is willing to stand the Ridicule of his Neighbours for the Sake of his Temporal Profit. Why should this Indifference as to the Opinions of Men be confined to Worldly Interests? Why should We be ashamed of owning, that *We have the Knowledge of God, and of calling Ourselves the Children of the Lord?* The true Honour, and true Interest lie certainly on this Side. If the Judgment of Wicked Men

Men
subje
We sh
their
They
Singu
take a
to par
Dishon
to judg
Good
Those,
tation,
In th
few Fo
the mid
Generat
the Sco
World,
in such
would

DISCOURSE IX. 183

Men were Final, if their Censure could subject Us to Eternal Disgrace and Ruin, We should have a Reason for regarding their Displeasure: But, since, when They would shame Us out of a virtuous Singularity, They only invite Us to take a Share in their Condemnation, and to partake with Them of Everlasting Dishonour in a Future State; It is easy to judge what Credit the Example, and Good Opinion of such Men deserve with Those, who have their own real Reputation, and real Interest at Heart.

In the first Ages of Christianity the few Followers of Jesus stood alone in the midst of an Idolatrous and polluted Generation: They bore with Patience the Scoffs, and Derision of a Sinful World, and thought Themselves happy in such a glorious Singularity. If They would have complied with the Public

Example, and have offered but one Grain of Incense to the false Gods of the Heathen, Their Way was open to Honour, and Preferment, and Wealth: But They chose rather to suffer like Moses, *Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season.* They were contented to be Objects of the Scorn of Men, that They might obtain Praise from God.

We are perhaps not born to such difficult Tryals of our Faith and Virtue. But We have our Tryals too, Living, as We do, in an Age where pious Conversation is unfashionable; where a profligate Offender against all the Rules of Sobriety and Chastity is often better received than a Conscientious Christian; and where every Mark of Zeal for the Service of God, and the Conversion of Man, is in Danger of being stiled Methodism,

D
thodism
therefor
tion, th
every T
ment, t
and to
Comme
Vicious
We ma
fort for
great D
Choice,
the App
the, Con
And
while, v
draw fro
Exempl
termine
You
bidden l

DISCOURSE IX. 185

thodism, or Hypocrisy. It behoves Us therefore to exert some Degree of Resolution, that We may be able to withstand every Temptation, and every Discouragement, that may be thrown in our Way, and to fortify our Hearts against the Commendations, as well as Censures of Vicious Men. When This is done, We may wait with Patience, and Comfort for the Judgment of God, in the great Day of Retribution, upon the Choice, which We make Here, between the Applauses bestowed upon Sin, and the Contempt of Religion and Virtue.

And let Us consider, in the mean while, what Encouragement We may draw from the Doctrine, and from the Examples recorded in Scripture, to determine our Conduct.

You will see There, that We are forbidden by the Law of God to *follow a*
Multitude

186 DISCOURSE IX.

Multitude to do Evil, that St. Paul enjoyns Us *not to be conformed to this World*. We are assured that *Though Hand join in Hand*, that is, though the Wicked think themselves safe in the Number of their Confederates, *they shall not go unpunished*. And our Saviour himself has declared, that *Whoever shall be ashamed of Him, and of his Words, in this adulterous and sinful Generation, of Him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the Holy Angels*. There are many other like Passages, which may assist our Judgment in this Matter: But, as there is not Time to turn to Them, I must leave Them to your own Reading and Observation.

Let Us however recollect what Particular Instances occur in Holy Writ of Religious Singularity, and of the Rewards attending it. And amongst Them,

Them
who i
were
Person
second
cution
utmost
nued f
though
had esc
Thus V
Cafe.
" the I
" Child
" Cove
" and
" Swor
" and T
" away.
The T
whole I

DISCOURSE IX. 187

Them, the First I shall mention is Lot, who in a Populous City, where there were not so much as Ten Righteous Persons, still preserved his Integrity. The second is Elijah, Who under the Persecution of a Wicked King, and at the utmost Hazard of his Life, yet continued stedfast in the Service of God, though He was the only Prophet, who had escaped the general Slaughter. For Thus We find him representing his own Case. “ I have been very jealous for
“ the Lord God of Hosts, because the
“ Children of Israel have forsaken thy
“ Covenant, thrown down thine Altars,
“ and slain thy Prophets with the
“ Sword : And I, even I only, am left,
“ and They seek my Life to take it
“ away.”

The Third is Noah, who, when the whole Race of Mankind had given
Them-

188 DISCOURSE IX.

Themselves up *to work Wickedness in the Sight of the Lord*, and were polluted to such a Degree, that God Almighty thought it necessary to clear the Earth of such a corrupt Generation by an Universal Destruction, yet resisted the Contagion of that General Ungodliness, and not only so, but had even the Courage to be a Preacher of Righteousness to a World of Sinners.

These were great and noble Instances of Singularity in Goodness: And, if We read the Sequel of their several Stories, We shall see that the Manner, in which it pleased God to reward those Heroes in Virtue, was no less singular than their Merit.

The First of the Three had an Angel sent from Above to save Him from that dreadful Judgment, by which the Abominations of Sodom were punished:

The

DISCOURSE IX. 189

The Second was taken up Alive by a Whirlwind into Heaven :

And the Third was Miraculously preserved, with his Family, from the Waters which overspread the Earth, to be the Father of a new, and better Generation.

We may judge, by these very remarkable Examples, of how great Value this Particularity of Religious Living, which is too often the Subject of Scorn, and Laughter to Men, is in the Sight of God : And, accordingly, if We desire to be *wise unto Salvation*, We shall go, and do *Likewise*.

D I S-

DI

Jeroboam

T

innumera
commit
and, Virt
ferent Po
It was t
the He
Mind, v
cident to
luted, b
tion, th

DISCOURSE X,

I KINGS xiv. 16.

*Jeroboam, who did sin, and Who made
Israel to sin.*

THAT, which We understand by the Name of Sin, under which are comprehended the innumerable Transgressions, which Men commit against the Rules of Religion, and Virtue, has been considered by different People in a Variety of Lights. It was taken by some of the Wisest of the Heathen to be a Disease of the Mind, which, like Some of Those incident to the Body, corrupted, and polluted, by a Kind of Pestilential Infection, the whole Mass of the Animal Faculties ;

192 DISCOURSE X.

Faculties; and left so deep a Taint upon the Souls of the Wicked, that, in order to the Restoring of Them to their Original Purity, It would be necessary for Them, after Death, to undergo several Sorts of Purgation. And, accordingly, that Some would be hung up for Ages in the Wind; Others plunged into the Deep; and a Third Sort have their Stains burnt out by Fire.

Amongst Believers there are Those, who represent Sin as totally contradictory to all the Conclusions of Right Reason, and repugnant to certain supposed Fitnesses, or Proprieties, which subsisted, as They tell you, before all Creation, and have been the same from Eternity.

Others, more Intelligibly, as well as more Scripturally, look upon Sin as an Abasement of Human Nature, which,

as Mo
ter of
his ow
ders th
Perfect
that Vi
must be
Degrad
nally r
Pattern
Ther
ing the
derstood
Almigh
Right t
ing, Sp
fit, to
made,
nion be
Purpos
Next, a

DISCOURSE X. 193

as Moses informs Us, in the first Chapter of Genesis, was created by God in his own Image. Now Whoever considers the infinite Holiness, and Moral Perfections of the Deity, must allow that Vice, in all it's numerous Kinds, must be the greatest Disfigurement and Degradation of a Nature, which originally resembled the true Source and Pattern of Every Virtue.

There is still a Fourth Notion concerning the Guilt of Sin, by which it is understood to consist in Disobedience to Almighty God, who has an indubitable Right to prescribe such Rules of Thinking, Speaking, and Acting, as he thinks fit, to those Creatures, whom He has made, and governs. And this Opinion being fully sufficient for all the Purposes both of This Life and of the Next, and containing so much Knowledge,

N

ledge,

194 DISCOURSE X.

ledge, as may make Us *Wise unto Salvation*, We may very well acquiesce Therein, and adopt all the Inferences which naturally arise from it. And such are These that follow.

That, if God has a Right, as our Creator, and Governor, to give Us Laws, He must have a Right too to enforce our Obedience to Them.

It is true that He might have created Us in such a Manner, as that our Disobedience to his Will should have been impossible. But in that Case our Obedience would have been like That of the Sun, and Moon, and Stars, or like That of the Winds and Seas to our Saviour, not such an One, as is yielded by Rational Creatures, whom God Almighty has made free by Nature either to do, or not to do his Will.

If

If
Reason
He wi
with re
Them.
Think
ing Sec
of God
ing the
be to n
on their
their M
Them.
And
tainly e
nerally;
ception.
In th
Sorts of
Strength
Early G

DISCOURSE X. 195

If then God has dealt with Us as Reasonable Beings, in giving Us Laws, He will consider Us in the same Light with regard to the Methods of enforcing Them. Now the ultimate View of Thinking, and Feeling Creatures, being Security from Evil, and Enjoyment of Good, The Natural Way of enforcing their Obedience to any Laws must be to make their Happiness depend upon their Conformity to such Laws, and their Misery upon their Transgression of Them.

And This is what God has most certainly established: In this World Generally; in the other without Exception.

In the present State we see several Sorts of Vice attended with Decay of Strength, Broken Constitutions, and an Early Grave. We see Beggary follow-

196 DISCOURSE X.

ing close upon the Heels of Luxury; and the irregular Pleasures of the Father entailing Sorrow upon the Children, as well as on Himself: The Noise of Jollity and Mirth converted to silent Groans; and all the Pride of Ungodly Life exchanged for the bitterest Remorse and Anguish.

But these are light and inconsiderable Evils compared with what is to follow, after that dreadful Sentence “Depart
“ from me ye Cursed into Everlasting
“ Fire,” shall have been pronounced by the Righteous Judge.

Some indeed may flatter Themselves, that their only Chastisement will be Eternal Death in the Grave: A poor, and unworthy Hope, rejected by Reason, as well as Revelation; and which They only can cherish in their Hearts,
who

who
sorer
Ot
Opini
will n
Infinite
Happi
fo: Y
tion is
acquai
Pains o
who h
some B
Fire, o
quisite
Them v
the Ag
Bitterne
rors o
should
Those

DISCOURSE X. 197

who know that They deserve a much *severer Punishment.*

Others seek for Consolation in the Opinion that the Sufferings of Sinners will not be really Eternal, but that the Infinite Mercy of God will bring all to Happiness in the End. Suppose it be so: Yet what a Comfortless Expectation is This for any One, who has been acquainted with even the Transitory Pains of the Present State? Let a Man, who has felt the extreme Anguish of some Bodily Distempers, the Smart of Fire, or who has but heard of the exquisite Tortures of the Rack; or let Them who have had any Knowledge of the Agonies of inconsolable Grief, the Bitterness of Self-Reproach, or the Horrors of Despair; consider how they should bear the Continuance of any of Those Sufferings, Bodily or Mental,

198 DISCOURSE X.

not for Hours or Days, but perhaps for many Years, or even for Ages; (for who but God can tell the Just Proportion of Punishment to the different Degrees of Rebellion against Him) and then let Them judge whether a Whole Life of Vicious Pleasures can outweigh even one whole Year of such intolerable Misery; and what Encouragement to persevere in Sin can be drawn from a Belief that their Torments will not last for Ever and Ever.

These and other vain Speculations may have served to give a Momentary Ease to some Wounded Consciences. But surely No Man in his right Mind would stake his All upon such dangerous Uncertainties.

Let Us rather reflect upon that Saying of the Apostle to the Hebrews, that *it is a fearful Thing to fall into the Hands*

of

of the
suade
give t
to pu
utmos
The
made l
is revea
liness a
though
if unre
deserve
of Puni
nite Ju
hinted)
fences;
viour's
I said
to God
sider ag
First, ag

DISCOURSE X. 199

of the *LIVING* God; and be persuaded, that, if He has Mercy to forgive the Penitent, He has Severity too to punish the Hardened Sinner to the utmost.

There is however no Doubt to be made but that, though *the Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men*, and though Every Crime that We commit, if unrepented, and unamended, both deserves, and will have the Recompence of Punishment Hereafter; yet the infinite Justice of God will (as I just now hinted) proportion Sufferings to Offences; And for This We have our Saviour's Authority.

I said that every Act of Disobedience to God deserves Punishment. For consider against whom it is committed: First, against Him, who has brought

N 4

Us

200 DISCOURSE X.

Us from Nothing, not only into Existence upon Earth, but into an assured Hope of Eternal Happiness in Heaven, if We chose to enjoy it; and who, in the mean while, has *crowned Us* in a thousand Instances, *with his Mercy and Loving Kindness*; Who sent his Son to be our Instructor, and Pattern, and Guide; and not only so, but to lay down his Life for our Sakes: Therefore Sin against God is the foulest Ingratitude. — Secondly, It is committed against our King and Governor: It is therefore Rebellion. — And, Thirdly, against our Judge, who has given Us full Warning of his Displeasure against It, and of his Resolution to punish the *Soul that Sinneth*. Therefore, It is a Defiance of his Vengeance.

This being the Case of every single Transgression against the just and equitable

table
of the
ing th
Power
do yet
in a c
mandr
guilty
truly f
against

But
Still m
Transg
conten
Iniquit
science
endeav
into a
tion.

In m
Folly a

DISCOURSE X. 201

table Laws of God, what shall We say of the Condition of Those, who, knowing the Will of their all Bountiful, all Powerful, and infinitely Just Creator, do yet dare to spend their whole Lives in a constant Opposition to his Commandments? These must be dreadfully guilty in the Sight of God, and may be truly said to *heap up Wrath to Themselves against the Day of Wrath.*

But there are amongst the Sons of Men still more provoking and audacious Transgressors. I mean Those, who, not contented with the Load of their own Iniquities, choose to burthen their Consciences with the Crimes of Others, and endeavor to draw their Innocent Brethren into a Share of their own Condemnation.

In my last Discourse I spoke of the Folly and Wickedness of following the
Ex-

202 DISCOURSE X.

Example of Others in Sinning against God: I shall, in what remains of This, set before you the horrid Impiety of Such, who set that Example.

To seduce Servants from their Master's Service, or Subjects from their Allegiance to their Sovereign, is a very high Offence against Human Laws. But to entice the Creatures of God into Disobedience to his Government, by your Advice; to encourage Them in it by your Example; This is setting up a Standard against Heaven, and heading a Rebellion against the Almighty.

To convert a Sinner from the Error of his Way, and to save a Soul from Death, is highly spoken of by St. James; And We are told by the Prophet Daniel, that They, who turn many to Righteousness, shall shine as the Stars for Ever and Ever.

What

DISCOURSE X. 203

What then must We think of the Reverse of this Character? Can We suppose that Those, who so distinguish Themselves in the Cause of Ungodliness, as to be Agents, and Sollicitors for it, will not be distinguished in their Punishment too? Can They, who have taken the great Tempter of Mankind for their Pattern; They who choose to imitate Him, who was *a Murderer from the Beginning*, in depriving Adam, and his Posterity of the Gift of Eternal Life; can They have the least Hope of escaping the terrible Sentence pronounced upon Him, and his Angels?

We have Examples in Scripture of some great Criminals in this Kind, and of the Judgments executed by God upon Them even in this World.

You have read in the Book of Numbers of the Story of Korah, Dathan and
Abi-

Abiram: How They drew the Congregation of the Children of Israel into Rebellion against Moses the Prophet of the Lord, and How the Earth opened, and swallowed up Them, with all that appertained to Them. All These, with their Wives, Children, and Families, *went down alive into the Pit*; whilst a Fire from Heaven consumed 250 more of the Men, who had signalized their Zeal in the same impious Faction.

You have in the History of the Kings of Israel a still stronger Instance of this most heinous Crime of Seduction, or withdrawing the Servants of God from their Duty to Him.

It is Jeroboam, who first introduced the Idolatry of the Golden Calves amongst the Ten Tribes, which had revolted under Him from the House of David. This wicked Prince is always
named

named
Writer
Title o
made I
not pas
accordi
phet A
scenden
be bur
God wo
too bec
pened a
2d Boob
between
Judah,
there fe
whom
five hun
that God
The S
the same

DISCOURSE X. 205

named with Abomination by the sacred Writers, and stigmatized with the odious Title of *Jeroboam the Son of Nebat, who made Israel to Sin*. But his Iniquity did not pass unpunished. For We find that, according to the Prediction of the Prophet Ahijah, only One of all his Descendents were to die in their Beds, and be buried like other Men: And that God would give up the People of Israel too because of his Sin. And This happened accordingly: For We see in the 2d Book of Chronicles, that, in a Battle between Jeroboam, and Abijah King of Judah, God smote his Army, so that there fell down slain of those People, whom he had perverted, no less than five hundred thousand chosen Men; and that God struck Him, and He died.

The Sin of Nebuchadnezzar was of the same Kind, but his Guilt still more
ex-

206 DISCOURSE X.

extensive, in Proportion as his Dominions were greater, and his Insolence towards God more abominable. For it was his Intention to establish Idolatry, not by Persuasion only, and Example, but by open Force, and the Terror of a dreadful Punishment. He set up a Golden Image (of Himself, as is thought) for the Worship of all People, Nations, and Languages. But it pleased the Lord, whose Power He had thus defied, to check, and humble his Presumption, in a very extraordinary Manner, as you may read in the Book of Daniel: For, when *his Heart was lifted up, and his Mind hardened with Pride; He was deposed from his Kingly Throne, and They took his Glory from Him: And He was driven from the Sons of Men, and his Heart was made like the Beasts, and his Dwelling was with the Wild Asses. They fed him with*

Grass

Grass
with t
that th
dom of
 The
 Instance
 Themse
 Lord o
 make,
 in his o
 May
 and Pro
 of their
 amongst
 as their
 testable
 We a
 by our
 whole N
 perhaps
 have it in

DISCOURSE X. 207

Grafs like Oxen, and his Body was wet with the Dew of Heaven; till He knew that the Most High God ruled in the Kingdom of Men.

These are conspicuous and shocking Instances of Wretches, who dared to set Themselves in Opposition against the Lord of Heaven and Earth, and to make, as it were, a Party against Him in his own Dominions.

May not We, in our narrow Sphere, and Proportion, *Sin after the Similitude of their Transgression?* and Do not Many amongst Private Christians follow, so far as their Influence reaches, the same detestable Patterns?

We are not indeed Princes to corrupt, by our Debaucheries and Impieties, whole Nations of Men: But there is not perhaps a Man living, who may not have it in his Power to draw some other
after

208 DISCOURSE X.

after him, by his Authority, or Counsel, or Example.

The first, and most frightful Instance of Seduction in Common Life, is That of Parents, on whom, under God, the future Behaviour of their Children does so greatly depend. We see often both Fathers, and Mothers expressing the most affectionate Tenderness for their Offspring, at the very Time that They pay not the least Regard to their future Happiness: But on the Contrary, either so totally neglect to give, or procure for Them any Religious Instruction; or even instill such Principles of Vice into Them; or make Them Witnesses to such a Conduct in Themselves; as must, in all human Probability, lead Them to a Life of Sin and Shame in this World, and to Everlasting Destruction in the Next. And what a Hardness of Heart,

what

what
dread
do th
contra
and D
was i
Vessels
it, ma
on the
Whose
is such
the L
Them a
and, in
One
though
gravati
who tal
viour o
whether
careless

DISCOURSE X. 209

what an Inhumanity is Theirs? How dreadful a Load of Guilt towards God do these thoughtless, unhappy Parents contract, who, having brought Sons, and Daughters into the World, when it was in their Power to fit Them for *Vessels of Mercy*, as the Apostle expresses it, make it their Business to fit Them, on the contrary, for *Vessels of Wrath*? Whose Conduct towards their Children is such, that They may be truly said, in the Language of the Gospel, *to give Them a Stone*, when They *ask for Bread*, and, instead of a *Fish*, a *Serpent*.

One may apply the same Reflexions, though not altogether with the same Aggravations, to Masters and Mistresses, who take no Thought about the Behaviour of their Apprentices, or Servants, whether Virtuous, or Vicious; and are careless as to the Examples, which They

O

set

210 DISCOURSE X.

set Them. They suppose that Instructing Them in their several Occupations, providing Them with Bodily Food, and paying Wages where due, is a Discharge of all They owe to Those under their Care; but it is to be feared, that, when the great Day of Account comes, They will find that there were other Duties attending their Situation, and no less obligatory upon Them.

In this Class of Sinners, Those too will bear a very eminent Rank, who delight Themselves in encouraging the Young and Inexperienced to transgress the Bounds of Sobriety and Virtue; who endeavor to conceal the Deformity of Sin; to laugh the Prohibitions of the Gospel out of Countenance; representing the Fear of God as a Prejudice of Education; and persuading Men, as the Serpent did

Eve,

Eve,
bidde
An
of Pro
behin
men.
with I
Degre
as is,
In th
These
there
are n
their f
Pleasu
Servic
Confe
and to
Case
thus d
mon I

DISCOURSE X. 211

Eve, that, though They eat the Forbidden Fruit, They *shall not surely die*.

Another, and That a Capital Instance of Promoting Disobedience to God, is still behind. I speak of the Seducers of Women. A Complicated Crime, chargeable with Injustice; with Cruelty; with such a Degree of Injury to a Fellow Creature, as is, in it's own Nature, irreparable. In the Heat and Selfishness of Passion These Things are not attended to: But there are Minutes, wherein all, who are not entirely abandoned, think of their future Interest, as well as present Pleasure. And in These, it may be of Service to Them to reflect upon the Consequences of such forbidden Actions; and to consider in Time, what Plea, in Case the Woman, whom They have thus decoyed into Sin, becomes a Common Prostitute, as is the Case of Thou-

212 DISCOURSE X.

sands; or a Murtherefs of the worst Kind, of her own Issue, of which too Multitudes have been guilty; what Plea I say, They, her first Corruptors, will have to offer at the Judgment Seat of Christ, against their Sharing, perhaps having the greater Share, in the Punishment due to such superior Degrees of Wickedness.

Your own Reflexion may suggest to you other Instances, wherein our Neighbour may be drawn into Disobedience to God by Imitation of our Personal Ill-Conduct, or in Compliance with our Persuasions: And let no Man flatter himself, from the Lowness, and Obscurity of his Rank, that there is no Danger of his falling under the Censure of a Propagator of Vice, and an Inciter to Rebellion against his Maker: For no Man, as I observed before, is so inconsider-

sidera
Advi
of his
that is
the In
becom
perhap
Confid
fore yo
of lea
Thou
rise ag
Origin
Great
if the
scarcely
who ha
sions t
are in
of Ma
Jerobo

DISCOURSE X. 213

siderable, but that He may, either by his Advice, or sinful Example, or Negligence of his Duty, corrupt Another: And He that is Himself so corrupted, may Spread the Infection, till the Wickedness of one becomes the Wickedness of Multitudes; perhaps even of Generations yet unborn. Consider therefore, again and again, before you set an Example to the Innocent of leaving the Paths of Virtue, that Thousands, whom You never saw, may rise against You in Judgment, as the Original Author of their Ruin, in the *Great and Terrible Day of the Lord*. And *if the Righteous* (as St. Peter says) *shall scarcely be saved, where shall They appear*, who have not only their own Transgressions to answer for, which God knows are in Us all fully sufficient, but Those of Many Others also, whom They, like Jeroboam, have *made to sin*.

Duty
on Us
munic
Anoth
our A
We m
and at
reprov
doer ;

DISCOURSE XL.

St. PAUL to the COLOSSIANS, iii. 8.

*Put off all These; Anger, Wrath, Malice,
Blasphemy, Filthy Communication out of
your Mouth.*

THE Government of the Tongue is not more a Point of Worldly Prudence, than of Religious Duty towards God. He has conferred on Us the Use of Speech for the Communication of our Thoughts One to Another, and for the Transaction of our Affairs, Public and Private; that We may make known our Wants; give, and ask Advice; instruct the Ignorant; reprove the Faulty; encourage the Well-doer; enjoy the Innocence of Friendly

216 DISCOURSE XI.

Conversation; and, above all, that We should employ it in the Praise of our great and gracious Benefactor.

But this noble, and most useful Faculty, if it is fitted, on one Hand, to give Glory to the Lord, and promote the Good, and Service of Mankind, is, on the other, capable of being perverted to the worst Purposes. *Therewith* (says St. James) *Bless We God, and Therewith Curse We Men, which are made after the Similitude of God.* And Thereby, We may add, the Peace of Private Families, the Affection of Relations, and Friends have often been, and even the Tranquillity of Nations may be destroyed, or endangered; and the Tongue, which should serve to Mutual Edification, is by many made an Instrument of Mutual Corruption.

In

DISCOURSE XI. 217

In the Epistle to the Colossians, from which the Words just read to You are taken, the Apostle having, in the preceding Verses, enumerated several Crimes, for which the Wrath of God came upon the Gentile World, viz. Fornication, Uncleanness, Inordinate Affections, Evil Concupiscence, and Covetousness; exhorts Them to abstain likewise from the Sins committed by Speech: Such are, 1st, Passionate, Reproachful, Abusive, and Threatning Language, which fall under the Words *Anger*, and *Wrath*.—2dly, Defamation, Scandal, False Accusation, and Mischievous Discourse, which belong to *Malice*.—3dly, *Blasphemy*, which comprehends all Irreverence of Talking with regard to the Supreme Being.—4thly, *Filthy Communication*, meaning obscene, indecent, and impudent Converse.

The

218 DISCOURSE XI.

The Two Former, Wrathful, and Malicious Words, though both highly offensive, I shall at this Time only warn you against, as what will certainly, if not repented, and left off, lead you to Final Destruction. I shall dwell more particularly upon the Guilt of the other Two.

The First is Blasphemy, which, in the Original Language, signifies all Kinds of Injurious Words, Whether relating to God, or Man. And it is by the Inspired Writers of the Scripture applied as often in one Sense, as the Other. Let Us therefore understand it Here in the former Signification, as taking in all those Speeches, whereby any Disrespect whatsoever, greater or less, is expressed towards Almighty God.

The Highest Degree of This is, when any Thing inconsistent with the infinite Purity,

Purity,
other A
of Him
culed,
rided, c
by tha
whom,
blasphem
against
God to c
Army, c
and five
But t
our gre
all it's c
mitted
sible ev
some A
Then
I have
behavin

DISCOURSE XI. 219

Purity, or Wisdom, or Justice, or any other Attribute of the Deity, is affirmed of Him; when his Holy Word is ridiculed, his Threatnings against Sin derided, or his Power defied; as was done by that impious Assyrian General, whom, because he had *reproached, and blasphemed the Lord, and exalted his Voice against the Holy One of Israel, it pleased God to destroy by his Angel, with his whole Army, consisting of an hundred, fourscore, and five Thousand Men, in one Night.*

But this Instance of Insolence towards our great Creator is such an One, as in all it's Circumstances, cannot be committed by any of Us, though it is possible even for Private People to make some Approaches towards It.

There are too besides Those, which I have just mentioned, other Ways of behaving undutifully, by the Words of
our

220 DISCOURSE XI.

our Mouth, towards God, and They are all, in their several Degrees, more or less liable to the Charge of Blasphemous Speaking.

The First, and One of the most daring Provocations, is That of Swearing in our Common Discourse; In the first Place, as being forbidden in express Words by our Saviour, Whose Command to all Christians is, *Swear not at all*. He does not say that We should not swear, when called upon by the Magistrate to give Evidence before Him, or in a Court of Justice: It is plain, by what follows, that the Prohibition relates only to our Common Talk. For, after having laid that solemn Injunction upon Us, that We should *not Swear at all*, He adds, "Let your Communication (It is in the Original *your Speech*) be Yea, Yea; Nay, Nay:" the Meaning

DISCOURSE XI. 221

ing of which is, that when We affirm any Thing or deny it, We should not back our Words by an Oath: For, *whatever* (says He) *is more than These*, that is, whatsoever goes beyond barely Affirming or Denying, *cometh of Evil*, or rather from the Evil One, that is, the Devil.

Now amongst Those, who would be thought true Christians, it is most astonishing, that such a direct Contradiction to the Law of our Blessed Saviour should prevail, and that, for the Sake of indulging Themselves in a Practice, which can yield Them neither Pleasure nor Profit, they should be willing to risk their Eternal Salvation.

And That they may forfeit it Thereby, We are assured by the Apostle St. James. *Above all Things* (You will observe of how great Consequence He thought it) *Above all Things*, says He,
My

222 DISCOURSE XI.

My Brethren, Swear not at all, lest you fall into Condemnation.

You may see in the Old Testament too how this particular Sin was punished, or threatened, by God Almighty, through the Prophets. Jeremiah declares to his Countrymen the Jews, that, *because of Swearing their Land mourned, and the pleasant Places of the Wilderness were dried up.* He lets them know besides that God would therefore *bring Evil upon Them.*

Another Prophet, as you may find in the Book of Zechariah, says: *Every one that stealeth, Every One that Swear-eth, shall be cut off.*

These Passages of Scripture carry with Them terrible Admonitions to Common Swearers; so terrible, that a Man of a Religious Mind cannot but trem-
ble

ble for
dignati
But
the Re
Sweare
confide
Who
Who y
Rais
mighty
Heaven
venture
Them
mendoc
tions of
roll ab
use th
the Wa
marked
the Mo

DISCOURSE XI. 223

ble for Them, who thus dare the Indignation of the Living God.

But secondly, if you desire to know the Reason of this great Severity against Swearers, I must recommend to You to consider,

Who it is that is offended by it, and Who you are that give the Offence.

Raise then your Thoughts to the Almighty, Everlasting God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth; and of You too, who venture to transgress his Will: Raise Them to that infinitely great and tremendous Being, who directs all the Motions of the vast Heavenly Bodies which roll above Us; Who *bath measured* (to use the Words of the Prophet Isaiah) *the Waters in the Hollow of his Hand; marked out Heaven with a Span; weighs the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in*
a Ba-

a Balance; Before Whom the Nations of the Earth are a Drop of the Bucket, and are counted as the small Dust on the Balance; Who stretcheth out the Heavens as a Curtain, and spreadeth Them as a Tent to dwell in; Who is every-where equally present through all the Extent of his boundless Creation; knoweth every Thought of our Hearts; and heareth every Word of our Mouth; and, Lastly, Who will come with Ten Thousands of his holy Angels to execute Justice upon All, and to convict all that are Ungodly, of all their Ungodly Deeds, and of all their hard, that is, injurious and impious Speeches, which Ungodly Sinners have spoken against Him. (Jude xiv.) Compare now Yourself: Compare all the Inhabitants of a Thousand Worlds, with this inconceivably Powerful Universal Lord: What are We,—What are They all,
in

DISCOURSE XI. 225

in his Sight, but poor, feeble, dependent Creatures, who have no Life, no Motion, no Existence but in Him. And is it suitable, think You, to such a Condition; Is it pardonable in Us wretched Mortals, to trifle with the awful Majesty of God; and to call on Him as a Witness in our idle, frivolous Disputes, or even sinful Conversations; as a Voucher to the Truth of those Things, which We often know to be false; and to the Integrity of our Hearts, at the very Instant that We are perhaps defrauding our Neighbour?

This is indeed strong, but not at all aggravated, being, in the worst Part of the Description, applicable to many; and, in some Degree or other, to Every Man, who allows himself in the dangerous Liberty of common Swearing.

P

And

226 DISCOURSE XI.

And what can They expect hereafter, who, in Contempt of a positive Commandment of God, and contrary to all that humble Reverence, which They owe to his infinite Greatness, are guilty of such daily repeated Prophane-
tions?

Like to This, or rather more execrably Wicked, is the Sin of Cursing our Brethren: In which, it is hard to say, whether Uncharitableness towards Man, or Impiety towards God, bear the greater Share. But This We may be sure of, that it is a Custom highly odious in his Sight, as being a direct Contradiction to that Spirit of Benevolence, by which it is our Duty and Glory to resemble his divine Perfection; and to every Principle, on Which the Gospel of our Blessed Saviour is founded. And surely, it must make the stoutest
Heart,

DISCOURSE XI. 227

Heart tremble to reflect that it may seem good to the Justice of God to pour down upon the Head of Him, who deals in this horrid Trade, all those dreadful Evils, which, in the Malice and Cruelty of his Anger, He has wished to fall upon Others.

But there is a more disinterested Kind of Cursers, People, who curse Themselves, and by fearful Imprecations, call down the Judgments of God upon their own Souls; And *That* often in Attestation to Things, which They have falsely affirmed. These seem to think (as is said by the Apostle upon another Occasion) that their *Damnation sleepeth*. They are in haste to hear the terrible Sentence pronounced upon Them. Wretches! Whose very Prayers are Sin, and who have nothing so much to fear as that their Wishes should be complied with,

228 DISCOURSE XI.

and God should condemn Them out of their own Mouth.

We have had, as it is credibly assured, in our Nation, and in our own Days, some very alarming Instances of such impious Mortals being taken at their Word, and carried off by a swift Destruction. God grant that Those, who imitate the Example of their Sin, may be reformed by the Example of their Judgment.

Yet some of these Cursing and Swearing Christians do not scruple to join with the Congregation in our Churches, and even to present themselves at the Holy Sacrament. But *How can Blessing and Cursing proceed out of the same Mouth.* How can they possibly imagine, that their Praises will not be an Abomination to the Lord, who pretend to worship

ship H
every v

Befi
there a
Habit
Revere
Thoug
are cer
pects,
The

ration f
Name
known
so mu
their L
Christi
tion, th
of God
disting
from a
general

DISCOURSE XI. 229

ship Him in his Holy Temple, but every where else blaspheme his Name?

Besides these more daring Offences, there are other Instances of a Kind of Habitual Prophanation of that *Holy and Reverend Name*, practised, without Thought, or Reflection, by Many, who are certainly not wanting, in other Respects, to the Reverence due to God.

The Jews of old had so great a Veneration for the Word *Jehovah*, by which Name it pleased God to make himself known to Them, that They would not so much as suffer it to come within their Lips. And it is reported of a great Christian Philosopher of our own Nation, that He never mentioned the Name of God, without making a Pause to distinguish it, by that Mark of Respect, from all other Words. Christians in general are not so scrupulous; for One

230 DISCOURSE XI.

may Often hear Them, even upon the most trifling Subjects, making Use of the Words *if it please God*, where they have no real Thought either of his Pleasure, or Displeasure; Or giving *Thanks to God* for Things unworthy to be joined in the same Sentence with his Holy Name, and Which are by no Means Objects of a Serious and Religious Gratitude. But This is certainly such an improper and indecent Familiarity, as cannot be blameless in his Sight. It is a Language, which should be reserved for Occasions of Importance; for the Communion of a Pious Heart with him who made it; and for the Religious Solemnity of Private, or Publick Devotion.

But if these Lower Degrees of Irreverence towards the Divine Majesty be justly censurable, Let Them, who
presume

presume
Oaths
greater
shocking

I ha
Blasph
ful Me
come
propo
which

Filtby
impud

Thi
Thing
loose,
it were
so seri
are Ch

It?

Yo
conne

DISCOURSE XI. 231

presume to dishonour God by prophane Oaths and Curses, consider, to what greater Marks of his Resentment their shocking Impieties must expose Them.

I have done now with the Subject of Blasphemy, or the wicked and disrespectful Mention of the Name of God. I come to the Second Part, in which I proposed to say something upon That, which the Apostle calls by the Name of *Filthy Communication*, or an obscene, and impudent Way of Talking.

This perhaps may be thought a light Thing, an Affair of mere Laughter, by loose, and inconsiderate Men. But if it were really So, How comes it to be so seriously treated in Scripture? Why are Christians so strongly exhorted against It?

You have seen with what Vices it is connected by St. Paul in his Epistle to

232 DISCOURSE XI.

the Colossians, Even with those heinous Crimes, which brought the Wrath of God upon the Gentiles, and with Malice, and Blasphemy. The Same great Teacher writes thus to the Ephesians. *Fornication and all Uncleanness, Let it not be once named amongst You: Neither Filthiness, nor foolish Talking.* And by a greater than Him, even our Blessed Saviour, the Anger of God is denounced against this Crime amongst Others: For there can be no doubt that as well obscene and lewd, as blasphemous, and irreligious Language, is included in those *Idle Words* of which, He so solemnly declares, that *They who speak Them, shall give an Account at the Day of Judgment; For by thy Words Thou shalt be justified, and by thy Words Thou shalt be condemned.*

This being so; You must be convinced that it is not only by the envious
Morose-

Morose
Sancti
be be
this di
minal
and yo
obeyin
The
look u
portan
fured
They
Hope
Benefi
be easi
among
regard
sure of
that th
tious M

DISCOURSE XI. 233

Moroseness of Old Age, or the affected Sanctity of Such, who would appear to be better than their Neighbours, that this dirty Practice is represented as Criminal; But by the sacred Word of God; and you know the Consequences of disobeying It.

The Levity, and Folly of Youth may look upon it as a Matter of small Importance to have their Behaviour censured by the Grave and Virtuous; and They may flatter Themselves with the Hope that the Loss of their Favour, and Benefits, Present, or in Prospect, may be easily replaced. But will the Bravest among Them dare to be indifferent with regard to the Approbation, or Displeasure of their God? Or can They think that the Noise and Jollity of loose, licentious Mirth can make Them any Amends
for

234 DISCOURSE XI.

for the Sorrows of future Condemnation.

If We consider this Practice in itself, it is unworthy, and below the Dignity of Human Nature, whose principal Ornament and Honour consists in abstracting the Mind, as much as possible, from low carnal Objects, common to Us with the Brute Creation, and raising it to the God-like Sentiments of Reason, Morality, and Religion.

If any Regard at all be due to Human Society, It is certainly to the Wisest and best Part of it that most is owing; and to Them Nothing can render a Man more odious and offensive.

If to our own Reputation, It is inconsistent with a good One.

If to Worldly Interest, Loss of Credit and Character is often attended with Loss of Bread, or other great Misfortunes.

Man-

Ma
gate a
Daugh
Libert
know
of usin
nerally
Action
Exper
Those
Mouth
defile
(says o
Murk
False
It i
Crime
ing of
Youth
If i
ing th

DISCOURSE XI. 235

Mankind in general are not so profligate as to see with Patience their Sons, Daughters or Servants, corrupted by the Libertine Discourses of others. They know that Those, who make no Scruple of using immodest Language, will generally make as little of doing immodest Actions; for They have been taught by Experience, as well as Scripture, that *Those Things, which proceed out of the Mouth come from the Heart*, and that They *defile the Man*. For out of the Heart, (says our Saviour) *proceed Evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Thefts, False Witness, and Blasphemies*.

It is a great Aggravation of this Crime, when it is committed in the Hearing of Children, or as yet uncorrupted Youth.

If it be done with a Design of preparing the Way to their Ruin, by depriving
ing

236 DISCOURSE XI.

ing Them of their happy Ignorance, and filling their Minds with a vicious Curiosity; No Name is bad enough, and perhaps no Punishment will be thought too bad for such Filthy Seducers of Innocence, if They do not expiate their Iniquity by a sincere Repentance and Reformation.

If it be done, on the contrary, without such an exprefs Intention, and you pretend that it is only in Jest that You stain your Conversation with such vile Ribaldry, You are like the Madman, mentioned in the Book of Proverbs, who *casteth Arrows, and Firebrands, and saith, am I not in Sport.* And it would behove You to consider that, though You do not absolutely intend to corrupt Those, who hear You, yet You are willing to risk the Doing of it: And, if Another reaps the Harvest of Debauchery, which
You

You ha
bearing
due to

I co
the Ap
who k
Proph
to lose
not;
rever
nor of
nor an
dit, c
Vices;
Let E
Swear
his In
assure
will b

DISCOURSE XI. 237

You have sown, Can You hope to escape, bearing your Share with the Punishment due to so foul an Offence?

I conclude with the Exhortation of the Apostle, with which I began, to all who know Themselves to be guilty of Prophane, or, obscene Communication, to lose no Time in *putting Them off*. If not; If neither the Consideration of Irreverence towards the Supreme Being, nor of Indecency with regard to Men, nor any Concern for Character and Credit, can prevail against those odious Vices; *Let Him that is filthy be filthy still*: Let Him that has made Cursing and Swearing familiar to Him, continue in his Impiety: But let Them both know assuredly, that *for these Things* also God will bring Them to Judgment.

DISCOURSE
I have found, Can You hope to escape
your share with the faithful
to be found in Christ
I conclude with the Exhortation of
the Apostle, who which I began to all
to know themselves to be sinners of
iniquity, and others of Conscience
to be no more in sinning. That of H
I have the Confidence of H
to be towards the Supreme Being
of industry with regard to H
but any Concern for Church and C
I have prayed against those who
I have prayed against those who
I have prayed that the whole Church
Contending families to this continue in
their unity; but let them both know
and I pray for the Unity and Gl
and I pray for the Unity and Gl
You are the subject of the
Subject of the

DI

2 COR

We fail
which
Us a
of Gl

I Ha
ma
ing
Comfor
therein
attentiv
take th
You wh
Subject

DISCOURSE XII.

2 CORINTH. iv. Part of the 16th, and
the 17th Verse.

*We faint not: For our light Affliction,
which is but for a Moment, worketh for
Us a far more exceeding, Eternal Weight
of Glory.*

I Have chosen this Passage out of
many of a like Import, as contain-
ing Matter both of Instruction, and
Comfort: And, as I think the Truth
therein asserted to be well worth your
attentive Consideration, I will therefore
take this Opportunity of laying before
You what has occurred to Me upon the
Subject of it,

Now

240 DISCOURSE XII.

Now the constant Language of the New Testament is, that Christians must suffer for Christ, and shall be recompensed Hereafter. Our Saviour himself declares that He, that would follow Him, must *take up his Cross*: An Expression borrowed from the Custom of obliging condemned Malefactors, to carry the Cross, on which They were to die, to the Place of Execution; and which seems to be used by our Lord with a Prophetick Allusion to what was to happen to Himself. It certainly conveys the Idea both of a severe, and contented Suffering. He says, in an other Place, that He, who will not do it, is *unworthy of Him*: In a Third, that it must be done *daily*: In a Fourth, that He, who does it, *shall have Treasure in Heaven*: and, In a Fifth, He declares Those *happy*, who shall be *persecuted for*
Righteousness

DISCOURSE XII. 241

Righteousness Sake, adding, that Their's is the Kingdom of God.

You see then the Necessity of submitting to Persecution, and bearing it with Patience, and the Connexion of present Suffering with future Happiness, very strongly inculcated by the Author of our Holy Religion, who not only preached that Doctrine to His Followers, but confirmed it by the Example of his own incessant Labours, and of those Distresses, Contradictions, and Reproaches, which he bore with such exemplary Patience; by the cruel Tortures of his Death; and by his glorious Resurrection, and Ascension.

His Apostles also, after his Departure, were frequent in repeating the same Declarations; and labour scarce any Point more than This, which We find Paul and Barnabas insisting on with the Dis-

Q

ciples

242 DISCOURSE XII.

ciples of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, that *We must through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.*

St. Peter too couples these two Things together, speaking of *the Sufferings for Christ, and the Glories which should follow*, as revealed by the Spirit of God to the antient Prophets.

To be *patient in Persecutions, and Tribulations*, is to be *worthy of the Kingdom of God*, according to St. Paul to the Thessalonians: who even adds, that It is a Justice in God *to give Them, who are thus troubled, Rest, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with the Angels of his Power.*

In the 13th Chapter of the Revelations, you will find set forth the glorious Exaltation of an innumerable Multitude of Martyrs, *standing before the Throne of God, cloathed in White Robes*, the Emblem
of

of Pu
Hands,
Sin, and

You
that th
barely i
as a Fa
Matter
the 6th
the H
who are
proach,
for the
Christ,
horted
those T
their Re

I nee
This, a
tually in

DISCOURSE XII. 243

of Purity; and *with Palms in their Hands*, as a Token of their Victory over Sin, and Tribulation, and Death.

You will also learn from Scripture, that these Religious Sufferings are not barely imposed as a Duty, but represented as a Favour, and Privilege; and as a Matter of Delight and Exultation. In the 6th Chapter of St. Luke, the Poor; the Hungry; the Sorrowful: Those who are the Objects of Hatred, of Reproach, of Abomination, amongst Men, for their Attachment to the Name of Christ, are pronounced *Happy*, and exhorted to *rejoice*, and *leap for Joy* when those Things happen to Them, since *their Reward will be great in Heaven*.

I need not multiply Texts to prove This, as it must occur to you perpetually in your own Reading.

Q 2

But

244 DISCOURSE XII.

But it will be here proper for you to observe, that Suffering for Christ is by no means to be confined to what is properly called Persecution, but may extend to every Instance of Hardship and Distress; of Bodily Pains, and Sicknesses; to Contempt, and Contumely; to Disappointments, and Self-Denials; when born, and exercised with a Conscientious Patience, and chearfully submitted to, either as the just Judgment of God upon our past Sins, or upon the Principle of an humble unrepining Obedience to the Decrees of his Providence.

Under these Qualifications only, the Common Calamities of Life can be considered as bearing any Relation to Religion and Conscience. For that Fortitude of Mind, which is requisite towards a patient Enduring of Grief, or Pain, may have it's Rise from Ostentation

tion and
the true
Bodies
and rea
profitab
wise co
tian C
Man.

The
seen to
their P
stinacy
dened,
stancy
the Sig
his hol
Praise
duce o
tance,
Still
ascribe

DISCOURSE XII. 245

tion and Vanity. Even Persecution for the true Faith; Even the Burning of our Bodies at the Stake, may be willingly, and readily endured, and yet prove unprofitable to Us, if our Hearts be otherwise corrupt, and void of the true Christian Charity, the Love of God, and Man.

The greatest Malefactors are often seen to go through the Torments of their Punishment with an amazing Obstinacy of Resolution; but with a hardened, impenitent Heart. This Constancy therefore can be of no Value in the Sight of God. Our Resignation to his holy Will, in order to have any Praise from Him, must be the Produce of a Mind purified by Repentance, and dedicated to his Service.

Still We must be cautious how We ascribe to our most dutiful and ready

246 DISCOURSE XII.

Submission to Afflictions of any Kind, wherewith it may please God to visit Us, the Merit of Expiation; That Merit, which belongs to the Sufferings, and Patience of the great Victim for Sin, our ever blessed Redeemer; and to Them alone. This would be a criminal Presumption. It is our Part to revere and imitate the patient Resignation of our Crucified Saviour, with an humble Hope, and Prayer to Almighty God, that our Desire of following his Example may be accepted for his Sake.

But though this Severity of Discipline, this Necessity of passing into Life Eternal through the straight and rugged Path of Afflictions, if We are called upon to undergo Them, be in Truth a capital Doctrine of Christianity; Let it not however be considered

as

as peo
a new
impos
Salvat
vants.
to the
the fa
Duty
tures
vailed
before
speaks
dergon
ing, In
ing-asu
about i
Mount
as bein
flicted,
And T
tained a

as peculiar to our Holy Religion, or as a new Burthen, and Test of Obedience imposed by the merciful Author of our Salvation upon his Disciples, and Servants. No: The Writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews will inform You, that the same Belief and Persuasion of the Duty of enduring all manner of Tortures in Defence of their Faith, prevailed amongst the Religious Jews long before the Coming of the Messiah. He speaks of Many of Them as having undergone the Trial of Mocking, Scourging, Imprisonment; of Stoning, Sawing-asunder, Crucifying; of wandering about in the Skins of Beasts, in Deserts, Mountains, and Caves of the Earth; as being destitute, oppressed, and afflicted, and not accepting Deliverance. And These All, (says the Epistle) *obtained a good Report*, or rather a Testimony;

248 DISCOURSE XII.

mony ; meaning that the Sincerity and Firmness of their Faith were a Recommendation of Them to the Favour of God : Which is the same Thing as was said by our Saviour (according to St. Luke) to his Disciples, viz. that the Persecutions, which They were to endure, would prove a Testimonial, or Certificate to Them of their Constancy and Zeal in his Service.

It is of no great Consequence to point out the particular Persons referred to in the above Passage, as Sufferers for Religion : But, amongst Them, the Author seems to have had in his Eye the dreadful Torments, and astonishing Resolution of the Mother, and her Seven Sons, recorded in the Book of Maccabees ; who defying the Indignation, and triumphing over the Barbarity of a merciless Tyrant, laid down their Lives
readily

DISCOURSE XII. 249

readily for Conscience Sake, in a full and joyful Expectation that *the King of the World would raise Them up, who died for his Laws, unto Everlasting Life.*

Neither indeed ought We to consider this Duty of sacrificing every Comfort, and Ease, and Pleasure of Human Life, nay and even that Life itself, to Truth, as taught by Revelation only, and consequently as known to None but Jews, and Christians. For We find the same Doctrine maintain'd in what is left Us of the Writings of Heathen Moralists. To be Proof against all the Terrors of Want, of Imprisonment, of Banishment, of Pain, of Disgrace, and of Death; and against all the Allurements of Wealth, of Power, and of Pleasure, when the Cause of Truth and Virtue required it; was not only the Precept, but

250 DISCOURSE XII.

but the Practice also, in some Instances, of Pagan Philosophy.

It may perhaps appear strange, and unaccountable to You, that Maxims so repugnant to the Feelings of Nature, should yet be so conformable to the Dictates of its Religion; and that They should have the Power, without the Assistance of any immediate Revelation from God, or any Certainty of a future Recompenſe, to prevail on thoſe antient Martyrs to abandon every Enjoyment, and expoſe Themſelves to every Suffering, for the Sake of Principle. But They conſidered Reaſon as the Ornament, and Dignity, and Diſtinction of Humanity. They underſtood it to be the Guide, and Governeſs of Life: Whatever was conformable to That, was an inviolable Rule of Action: Whatever contradicted it was thought more ſhocking

DISCOURSE XII. 251

shocking to Nature, than Beggary, and Chains, and Death. The Precepts of Moral Virtue were the Dictates of Truth, deducible from Right Reason, and therefore to be obeyed at any Expence.

These Observations, I think, will fully prove that there is something, in Suffering for Conscience, conformable to Reason; acceptable to the Deity; and qualifying for future Glory: And that They do not belong exclusively to This, or That system of Religion; nor were so frequently, and so strongly pressed upon the first Christians, as a means only of Crediting, and Establishing that Divine Institution; but are, on the contrary, of universal, and perpetual Obligation.

And indeed there can be no Reason assigned for any Man's preferring Martyrdom to the Renuntiation of his Christian

252 DISCOURSE XII.

tian Faith, which would not equally oblige Him to prefer it to the committing of an Immoral Action, abjuring the Truth, or violating the Commands of God in any other Instance whatsoever.

The Obligation is therefore, as I just now remarked, general, and unlimited; and, I may add, of so high Importance too, that even the Son of God, our ever blessed Saviour, had no Exemption from it; but was, as we learn from Scripture Authority, *for the suffering of Death, crowned with Glory and Honour*: And the Author of Salvation to Others was Himself *made perfect*, or rather consecrated, (*viz.* to his Office of Redeemer of Mankind) *through Sufferings*. To the same Purpose We find him reproaching some of his Disciples with the Slowness of their Understanding in not having
learnt

learnt
necess
He sh
may
this C
came
Witne
He d
his I
Work
the A
He e
fore I
In
Duty
and e
it wa
Won
to th
bitio
Mar

DISCOURSE XII. 253

learnt from the Prophets, that it was necessary for the Messiah *to suffer* before He should *enter into his Glory*. And you may recollect his Answer to Pilate: *For this Cause was I born, and for this Cause came I into the World, that I should bear Witness to the Truth*. And accordingly He did bear Witness to it, not only by his Divine Teaching, and wonderful Works; but still more convincingly by the Agonies of his Crucifixion, which He *endured for the Glory that was set before Him, despising the Shame*.

In the early Ages of Christianity this Duty was judged to be so indispensable, and essential to Future Happiness, that it was a common Practice for Men and Women to offer Themselves voluntarily to the Flames, contending, with an ambitious Impatience, for the Crown of Martyrdom. But they carried the Mat-
ter

254 DISCOURSE XII.

ter too far, and were undoubtedly actuated by a *Zeal not according to Knowledge*; Since it is an exprefs Command of our Saviour to his Disciples, that, when They were *persecuted in one City*, They should *flee into another*; and since neither Reason nor Religion authorize an unnecessary, and unrequired Sacrifice of those Lives, which might be employed in the Service both of God and Man.

The Thing demanded of Us, is, not to seek after Pain, and Death, but to prepare our Minds to endure Them, whenever it shall please God to call Us to that Tryal of our Obedience and Faith. And, upon the same Principle, It cannot be the Duty of every Man, whatever some Enthusiasts may pretend, to renounce and give up all the Comforts and Conveniencies, and innocent Plea-

DISCOURSE XII. 255

Pleasures of Life: But to use Them with Moderation, and Gratitude, and to hold himself in Readiness to part with all, if, upon any Occasion, They come in Competition with the Allegiance due to Him, whose Gifts They are; and can be no longer held consistently with a good Conscience: This is Every Man's Duty.

It may be objected to the Whole of this Doctrine, that it is hard to reconcile the infinite Tenderneſs and Compaſſion of God to his Creatures, and his declared Deſire of their Final Happineſs, with his placing ſo great Difficulties in the Way to It, and exacting ſuch painful Testimonies of their Love and Gratitude to their Maker.

But when it pleaſed God in his Wiſdom to create Man, a Being Imperfect but capable of Perfection; Mortal but fitted

256 DISCOURSE XII.

fitted for Immortality—to place Him in a State of Probation, giving Him Free Will to choose—and making Virtue, or Vice, Truth, or Falshood, the Objects of his Choice—to connect with the Former Reward, with the Latter Punishment—to induce Him, at the same Time, with Reason to distinguish between Them—and with Conscience to excite, or restrain; to applaud, or to reproach—How could it be consistent with such a Plan, or indeed with the very Idea of Trial, to require an Obedience, which should cost the Probationer Nothing? To propose a Prize of Victory to be gained without Contention? And to give the Wages of Industry to Sloth and Indolence?

If This be contradictory, and absurd, What remains but to insist, that Man should have been formed originally

nally
bility
haps
and t
der a
We f
ter Pa
not;
ture t
actual
first E
They
of Tr
Scene
Kingd
Th
fional
Unive
ment.
ing ou
many

DISCOURSE XIII. 257

nally Happy, and subject to no Possibility of Miscarriage? We think perhaps that the Angels were so created, and that our Condition is therefore harder and worse than Their's. But are We sure that the Fact is so? The Latter Part of the Supposition is certainly not; for We have the Warrant of Scripture to assure Us that some of Them did actually fall by Transgression from their first Estate. And how know We that They too may not have had their Time of Tryal, and have passed through a Scene of Temptations, into the Eternal Kingdom of God?

This Method of dealing with his Rational Creatures may be, possibly, an Universal Rule of his Moral Government. To give some Share in the *Working out* of their own *Salvation* to the *many Sons*, whom *the Father of Spirits*

R

will

258 DISCOURSE XII.

will *bring to Glory*, must appear even to our Apprehensions a Proceeding of the highest Propriety: And, as to the Particular Duties which shall intitle the Creature to the Acceptance of his Creator, and prepare him for a better State, They are no doubt determined by Reasons of everlasting Rectitude, though our present limited Capacity should not enable Us to form any Judgment, or even any Conception of Them; uninformed, as we are, of the precise Nature and Circumstances of our future Existence, and unable, in what is revealed concerning it, to distinguish always between the Figurative, and the Real: Ignorant of the true Relations, Correspondencies, and Connexions between this World, and the Next; and between This, and every other Part of God's Creation: And under numberless
Dif-

Diffic
and S
Earth
cessary
justify
sisting
the V
in the
Kne
Ways
to Us
Sh
Wisd
our C
which
the D
Sh
Grati
cious
Reac

DISCOURSE XII. 259

Difficulties with regard to Antecedent, and Subsequent ; Material and Spiritual ; Earth, and Heaven : Difficulties necessary to constitute the *Righteousness*, and justify the Rewards of *Faith*, as consisting in an unreserved Dependence upon the Veracity, and unlimited Acquiescence in the Will of God.

Known unto Him are all his Works and Ways : How Few of Them are known to Us !

Shall we then dare to prescribe to the Wisdom, and Justice, and Goodness of our Creator ; and to censure the Terms which He has thought fit to annex to the Disposal of his Gifts ?

Should we not rather, with humble Gratitude, adore that bountiful and gracious Master, who has placed within the Reach of our sincere Endeavors, such an

260 DISCOURSE XII.

unbounded Prospect of Cælestial Happiness; who requires at our Hands no Abstinence but from Things Hurtful, no Compliances but with such, as are really Beneficial to Us? who, if He at any Time thinks fit to chastise Us with Sorrow, with Misfortune, or with Bodily Pain; Or, if He calls upon Us to attest our Attachment to his Laws; to prove our Affection to the Truth; and to seal, even with our Blood, our Trust in his Promises; does but give Us fresh Instances of his Fatherly Affection, and new Opportunities of securing, and augmenting our future Bliss?

St. Paul declares his Opinion, that *the Sufferings of the Present Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory to be revealed in Us Hereafter*: And you may recollect, in the Acts of the Apostles,
how,

DISCOURSE XII. 261

how, when some of Them had been beaten by Order of the High Priests, and his Councillors, for refusing to comply with their Injunction to desist from publishing the Gospel of Christ, They departed from their Presence, *re-joycing that They were counted worthy to suffer Shame for his Name.*

Let us pray to God, whose Pleasure it is that We should qualify Ourselves for Salvation by a firm, and resolute Adherence to his Holy Religion, to raise in our Hearts the same Divine Ardor, and Ambition to render Ourselves Objects of his Approbation; and to dispose our Understandings to form a just Judgment of the Insignificancy of all these momentary Enjoyments, and the Lightness of every Temporal Suffering, when put into the Scale against

262 DISCOURSE XII.

that *Exceeding, and Eternal Weight of Glory*, which *He has prepared for Those who shall continue to the End in his Love. Amen.*

D I S-

D

F

As of

th

til

sh

of

of

L

bi

th

dr

et

th

di

DISCOURSE XIII.

I CORINTHIANS Chap. xi.

From the 26th to the 31st Verse.

As often as You eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, You do shew the Lord's Death till He come—Wherefore,—Whosoever shall eat this Bread, and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord: But, Let a Man examine Himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup: For He that eateth, and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation, (or rather, as it is in the Margin, Judgment) to Himself, not discerning the Lord's Body. For this

R 4

Cause

264 DISCOURSE XIII.

Cause Many are weak, and sickly among You, and Many sleep. But, if We would judge Ourselves, We should not be judged.

I KNOW no Passage in Scripture, which more deserves to be seriously considered, and rightly interpreted than This, either as a Point of Christian Knowledge, or a Rule of Christian Duty.

To understand it in its true Meaning, It is necessary to know both to Whom the Apostle addresses it, and upon what Occasion.

Now, as to the Persons applied to, The Words, which I have read to You are Part of a Letter written by St. Paul to the Converts, whom He had made to Christianity amongst the People of Corinth, a great Idolatrous City of Greece.

And

DISCOURSE XIII. 265

And as to the Occasion, He had but lately instructed Them in the Doctrines of the Gospel, and particularly in the Duty of assembling Themselves together to celebrate the Holy Communion. In his Absence an Account had been sent him, that these new Christians had already perverted, and defiled that Sacred Ordonnance of our Saviour, by using it as a Common Meeting for the Purpose of Eating and Drinking, to which Those, who were able, brought Provisions, Some More, Others Less, and the Poorer Brethren Nothing at all, as depending on the Charity of the Rich—From Thence arose an indecent Contention in sharing what was prepared amongst the first Comers, and a shameful Hurry in not waiting till the whole Body was assembled. Accordingly One Part of the Company got too much,
and

266 DISCOURSE XIII.

and were drunken; and Another too little, and were hungry; whilst Every One was for helping himself first, and to a more plentiful Portion than his Neighbour. These Particulars may be all inferred from the Apostle's Discourse.

But This, he observes to Them, was not to eat the Lord's Supper: And He treats it as a Contempt of the Church of God to abuse the Sacrament in so gross a Manner, by taking it as a Common Meal, or Feast. This too is what He afterwards calls, not *discerning the Lord's Body*, that is, not distinguishing the Elements of Bread and Wine, which He had ordained to be Symbols, or Signs representing to Us his Body as pierced and wounded, and his Blood as shed upon the Cross, from our Daily Food.

Let

DISCOURSE XIII. 267

Let a Man therefore, says St. Paul, examine (or rather prove, or make Tryal of) Himself, that is, let him satisfy his own Conscience that He has a due Reverence for that Holy Ceremony, before He ventures to partake of it: For, if he does it *unworthily*, meaning if he does it, as those Christians did, in such a Manner, as not to remember with a pious Gratitude, the Sufferings of Christ for his Sake, but on the contrary receives the Bread and Wine as a mere Bodily Refreshment; Much more, if he makes them Instruments of Intemperance, Greediness, and Want of Charity, He becomes guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ, that is, of Disrespect, Irreverence, and Impiety towards our Blessed Saviour, and gives a Kind of tacit Approbation to the Sin of Those, who were his Murtherers. The
Conse-

268 DISCOURSE XIII.

Consequence whereof is, that, instead of being a Partaker of the Benefits of his Death, He exposes himself to the Displeasure of Almighty God, Whose Judgments of Sickness and Infirmary had already fallen upon Many of those irreligious Communicants, and had brought some of them too to an untimely End.

Therefore his Advice is, that We should judge of the Disposition of our own Minds towards a *Worthy*, that is, a Reverential Receiving of the Sacramental Bread and Wine, before We approach the Lord's Table, in order to avoid the Punishments due to a Contrary Behaviour.

If This be, as I am persuaded it is, a true Interpretation of the Words of the Apostle, It will enable Us to form a right Judgment both concerning the
 Sacra-

DISCOURSE XIII. 269

Sacrament itself, and What is required of Us in Relation to it.

And, first, as to the Sacrament itself: St. Paul's Account of it is so much the more worthy of our most serious Attention, as He, who had not the Opportunity which the other Apostles had, of being present at the Original Institution, received the Description, which He gives of it to the Corinthians, by immediate Revelation from the Lord: We may therefore safely rely upon his Explanation too of the Intent and Meaning of that Solemnity, which is short but full, explicit, and comprehensive. He does not say, as some Christian Teachers do, that the Body, and Blood of Christ, Which We, who take our Religion from the Scripture only, believe to have been but once offered, is sacrificed every Day by ten Thousand different

270 DISCOURSE XIII.

different Priests, in as many different Places, viz. in all Those where the Popish Mass is performed: Nor that the whole Number of Communicants do Each, at one and the same Celebration, receive, eat, and swallow the whole real Body, and Blood of Christ, as being both contained in every Wafer, that is consecrated by the Priest; and no less in the Sacramental Wine which he reserves for Himself. But what he says is This, that so often as We eat that Bread, and drink that Cup, We do shew, or declare the Lod's Death till He come; That is, either till He come to Judgment, or, perhaps, till, by his Second Coming and Appearance upon Earth, We shall be in Possession of the Reality, and have no farther need of Signs, and Symbols, to refresh the Recollection of Him in our Thoughts.

His

DISCOURSE XIII. 271

His Opinion therefore was, that the Sacrament was instituted for this Purpose, that the Breaking of the Body, and Shedding of the Blood of the Redeemer for the Reconciliation of Mankind to God, might be commemorated, or preserved in Memory, by the Faithful in all Ages.

And indeed this Interpretation will be strongly confirmed, by comparing what our Saviour did upon this Occasion, with the Proceedings of God Almighty in other Instances of Things intended to be had in perpetual Remembrance.

As First: The Seventh Day was blessed by God, and ordered to be kept Holy for ever, because, (as you read in the 2d Chapter of Genesis) *God ended his Work, which he had made, and rested from it on that Day.* This was therefore appointed as a Memorial to Future
Ages

272 DISCOURSE XIII.

Ages of the Creation of the World by God.

Secondly, We find the same Ordinance re-enacted, and repeated, as a particular Commandment to the Jews, and One of the Ten given to Them from Mount Sinai: For those People had certainly the greatest Reason to remember, and transmit to their Posterity the Wondrous Works, and Loving Kindness of the Lord their God, not only as Creator of the whole Earth, but as the God, who had taken Them into his peculiar Government, and Protection, and procured Them *Rest* from their *Ægyptian* Slavery, and Oppression.

Thirdly, We find an Institution for the perpetual Observation of a certain Day, upon another great Occasion, Namely the Miraculous Preservation of the same People, when God slew all the

First

First
Wha
Passo
ing i
every
tions
over
rael,
Al
so st
had b
ing S
Alm
to D
Time
Passo
lect t
Israel
Co
St. P
Sakra

DISCOURSE XIII. 273

First born of Egypt in one Night. What I mean is the Feast called the Passover, with the Ceremonies attending it, which was ordered to be kept by every Israelite through all their Generations, in Memory of God's having *passed over* the Houses of the Children of Israel, when he smote the Egyptians.

And these Ordonnances of God were so strongly enjoined, that a Man, who had broken the Sabbath, by only gathering Sticks on that Day, was, by God Almighty's exprefs Command, stoned to Death: And it was declared, at the Time of instituting the Feast of the Passover, that the Soul, who should neglect to keep it, should be cut off from Israel.

Compare now these Things with what St. Paul says in relation to the Christian Sacrament, and you will see a remark-

S

able

274 DISCOURSE XIII.

able Similitude, as well in the Appointment of It for a perpetual Commemoration of the great Deliverance of Mankind by Christ Jesus; as in the Severity of God towards Those who should despise or prophane it. For it was for that Cause, according to St. Paul, that many of the Corinthians were punished with Sickness, and Infirmary, and Many even with Death. And I see no Reason to doubt but that the same Judgments may be still executed, tho' unknown, and undistinguishable by Us, upon Offenders in the like Kind.

Let Us now see what Rules for our own Conduct We may draw, either from the exprefs Direction of the Apostle to the Corinthians, or by just Inference from his Doctrine.

The First is, that, before We presume to approach the Table of the Lord,

Lord
mina
The
of th
whic
pres
infin
Grac
for o
God
tion
the
ful
that
paci
Faith
W
cann
to a
have
Prop

DISCOURSE XIII. 275

Lord, We should, by a careful Examination of our Hearts, be sure that They are possessed with right Notions of that awful Solemnity. In order to which, We should endeavour to impress upon them a just Sense of our infinite Obligations to that Great and Gracious Saviour, who was contented, for our Sakes, to degrade Himself from Godlike Glory to the lowest Condition of Human Life, and to die upon the Cross the ignominious and painful Death of a Slave, or Malefactor; that so, He might put Us into a Capacity of obtaining Everlasting Life by Faith and Repentance.

With these Thoughts about Us, We cannot come to the Lord's Supper as to a Common Entertainment, nor behave at it Lightly, Intemperately, or Prophanely. Consequently, being thus

276 DISCOURSE XIII.

prepared, We cannot receive the Sacrament *Unworthily*, in the Sense, wherein St. Paul applied that expression.

So far then our Conduct will be unexceptionable: But This is not all: For, if your Business at the Communion-Table be to commemorate the Death of Christ, Such a Commemoration cannot but be attended, as with a grateful Thanksgiving to Almighty God, so with an ardent Desire, and humble Petition to be made Partakers of the Blessings resulting from it. Now You must be sensible that, without performing the Conditions, upon which those Blessings are promised, Your Prayer to be intitled to Them is a mere Mockery of God, instead of an Act of Religious Worship.

It is therefore another Part of our Duty to come to the Sacrament with a sincere

finc
been
for
fess
Men
to
Cov
of h
If
tion,
as o
We
and
Exte
be
Cere
thing
A
this
sincer
We

DISCOURSE XIII. 277

sincere Resolution (whatever may have been our past Behaviour) to serve God for the future as We ought ; To profess ourselves Disciples of Jesus Christ, Members of his Church, and, as Such, to renew at his Table our Baptismal Covenant of Obedience to the Precepts of his holy Gospel.

If This be not our sincere Intention, if We do not acknowledge Him as our Lawgiver and Judge, whom We commemorate as our Benefactor, and Saviour, our Compliance with the External Rites of his Institution will be at best but a vain insignificant Ceremony, and can avail Us Nothing.

A Third Obligation resulting from this Notion of the Sacrament is, that since, at the Time of Receiving it, We declare Ourselves, in the Face of

278 DISCOURSE XIII.

the Congregation, to be united with Those then Present, and with the Whole Body of Christian People in the Service of one Common Master, We come to that Holy Communion with Hearts free from all Malice, and Ill Will, all Resentment, all Intention and even Desire of Revenge against any of our Brethren: Considering that He, whose Disposition is void of Charity, and Brotherly Affection, though but in a single Instance, stands in Opposition both to the Temper, and Law of his merciful Saviour, Whose Kindness extends to all without Exception, though all have offended Him: That Man therefore can have no Hope of partaking in his Love.

In general We ought to be assured, that, whilst our Consciences are loaded
with

with
phan
Dut
Fals
our
teou
gard
We
godl
We
at th
trary
Ther
As A
that
stand
the
of th
Cont
drink

DISCOURSE XIII. 279

with the unrepented Guilt of any Prophaneness or Impiety, or Neglect of our Duty to God; with any Dishonesty, Falsehood, or Uncharitableness towards our Neighbour; or with any Sin of Covetousness, Intemperance, or Lust, in regard to Ourselves; In a Word, whilst We continue in the Practice of any Ungodliness, or Immorality whatsoever; We cannot be worthy Communicants at the Lord's Table; but on the contrary must be looked upon as Intruders There, rather than as Welcome Guests: As Affronters instead of Worshippers of that Holy God, in whose Presence We stand: Or to speak in the Language of the Apostle, We make ourselves *Guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ* by our Contempt and Irreverence; *and eat and drink Judgment to ourselves.*

280 DISCOURSE XIII.

It is therefore a Mistake to imagine that what is called a Week's Preparation, if it consists in Nothing but the Reading of some Good Book, and uttering an unusual Number of Prayers, previous to a Sacrament Day, can, if it go no farther than That, I say, be sufficient to qualify a Man for receiving it *Worthily*. Those Things, so far as They are practised in the Way of Incitements and Helps to Repentance, are good, and useful. But without a thorough Amendment, of our Faults, and a determined Resolution of Living, for the future, in sincere Obedience to the Laws of God, and Charity towards all his Creatures, We are certainly not prepared for appearing at his Table.

The Person in the Parable, who came to the Feast without a Wedding Garment, was ordered to be bound Hand and

DISCOURSE XIII. 281

and Foot, and cast into the Darkneſs without, There to bewail his Folly, and Diſreſpect.

This Representation of the Qualifications required in a *Worthy* Communicant ought not to deter any One, who can, with a Good Conſcience join in any other Part of the Divine Worſhip, from receiving the Sacrament; ſince the Preparation of a Good and Virtuous Life, added to a true Faith in Jeſus Chriſt, is as neceſſary in One Caſe, as in the Other.

To offer any Prayers or Praises to the Maſteſty of Almighty God, with falſe and unſanctified Lips; from a Heart tainted with the Guilt of Irreverence, and Rebellion againſt Him; and without any Deſign of Amendment; any real Deſire of the Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit to enable Us to lead
a bet-

282 DISCOURSE XIII.

a better Life for the Future; is doubtless as Criminal, and as great a Provocation, as the presenting Ourselves in the same State of unlamented Sin at the Holy Sacrament.

But This is a Scruple, which prevails for the most Part in the Minds of Those, who have the least Occasion to be affected by it.

If We all lived as We ought, and entertained just and worthy Notions of the Infinite Mercy of God to his poor sinful Creatures, in opening to Us a Way to Everlasting Life through the Death and Resurrection of Christ our Saviour, We should go to the Sacrament with Delight and Satisfaction, and rejoice in every Opportunity of Publishing to all the World our Connexion with Him, as Members of his Kingdom; Avowing our Obligations to his

Good-

DISCOURSE XIII. 283

Goodness; and renewing our Engagements to serve Him with Fidelity, and Perseverance in this World, in an humble Hope of being made Partakers of his Happiness and Glory Hereafter.

God grant it to Us All!

D I S.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW
CHAPTER I
In that time Jesus came into Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and being glorified of all.

And he came to Nazareth, where he was brought up: and he went into the synagogue, as his custom was, and stood up to read.

And he found the book of the prophet Isaiah, and he opened it, and found that which was written,

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME TO PREACH TO THE POOR; HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM THAT THE LORD HAS ANOINTED ME TO PREACH TO THE POOR.

And he rolled up the book, and he gave it to the attendant, and he sat down. And all eyes were fastened upon him.

And he began to say unto them, This day is fulfilled in your ears.

And he said unto them, This day is fulfilled in your ears.

D I

Remen

S

comp
Word
of hi

In
Doct
the fo

Fi

Se

DISCOURSE XIV.

ECCLESIASTES xii. i.

Remember thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth.

SUCH is the Advice of Solomon, the Wise King of Israel; the Ecclesiastes, or Preacher, who composed the Book, from whence these Words are taken: An Advice worthy of his Wisdom.

In order to illustrate and inforce this Doctrine, It will be proper to consider the four following Points.

First, Who, and what is our Creator.

Secondly, What it is to remember Him.

Thirdly,

286 DISCOURSE XIV.

Thirdly, What Obligations, and Inducements We have, all of Us in general, to do so.

Fourthly, Why more particularly in the Days of our Youth.

And, First: As to the great and important Enquiry, Who is our Creator.

Though We cannot surely be Any of Us at a Loss to give a proper Answer to that Question, since We have been taught it from our Cradles; have read it in the Holy Scriptures; and have heard it so often from the Pulpit; It is however a Point, upon Which our Memories cannot be too often refreshed. There is certainly no Knowledge so worthy of the Rational Creatures of God, as that He is their Creator ;

DISCOURSE XIV. 287

ator : Nor any Subject, on which our Thoughts can be so well employed, as in the Contemplation of that Infinite, Eternal Being, that All-wise, All-knowing, All-Present, and Almighty Lord, who created Heaven, and the Angels of Heaven; who has filled the immense Space around Us with almost innumerable Worlds, with Suns to enlighten Them, and Creatures, no doubt, to inhabit Them; who supports this vast Creation, and every Member of it, whether Animate, or Inanimate, by the same *Word of his Power*, by which He made Them; who gave to Us Men this rich, and beautiful Heritage, one of the *Manfions in his House*, to possess and dwell in; put the prodigious Variety of Animals, which replenish it, under our Command; and endowed Us with Skill,
and

288 DISCOURSE XIV.

and Strength sufficient to govern, and apply Them to our various Uses.

It is He, the same gracious God, who conferred on Us the Gift of Reason, his own Image, to be the Light of our Lives; and Conscience to be the Guide.

It is He, to whom We are indebted for the inestimable Treasure of the Gospel: Who redeemed Us by his Son, and sanctifies Us by his Spirit: Our Preserver, Lawgiver, and Governor Here; Our Rewarder, or Punisher Hereafter.

2dly, When We are therefore exhorted to remember our Creator, It cannot be meant that We should barely recollect that there is such a Power above Us; Or that We should have a mere speculative, and barren Knowledge of his Existence, as a Question of Curiosity

DISCOURSE XIV. 289

riosity and Learning: But that We should acknowledge him in all the Relations, which He bears to Us, who are *the Sheep of his Pasture, and the Workmanship of his hands*: That We should keep Him constantly in our Thoughts, with all that We have to apprehend from his Justice, or hope from his Mercy; making it the principal Care, and Concern of our Lives, to recommend Ourselves to his Favour and Protection, by a strict Conformity to his Will. In a Word, that We should reverence Him as our Father, obey Him as our King, love Him as our Benefactor, fear Him as our Judge, and worship Him as our God.

3dly, If This great Universal Lord of Heaven and Earth, has in Truth formed Us from the Dust, has breathed into Us a Living Soul, and made Us

T

capable

290 DISCOURSE XIV.

capable of Everlasting Happiness in re-
turn for our imperfect Obedience to his
Laws, We cannot but own that We are
obliged by every Tye of Duty and Gra-
titude to remember Him.

But if the Consideration of his infi-
nite Goodness in granting Us the in-
numerable Blessings of our present State
of Existence, and, above all, that Capi-
tal Mercy, *Repentance unto Life*, be not
sufficient to fill our Hearts with a thank-
ful Remembrance of his Benefits, and
to raise Them to a generous Ambition
of pleasing Him; We have Another,
and One would think, an irresistible
Inducement to bear Him always in
our Minds, and to measure all our
Thoughts, and Words, and Actions, by
the Standard of his Commandments; I
mean the Dread of his Resentment.
For who knows, (as the pious Psalmist
says)

DISCOURSE XIV. 291

says) *the Power of his Anger?* Who can say what Degree, and Length of Punishment is due, or rather what is not due, to Those, who forget the Lord their God, and who dare to rebel against their most gracious, and bountiful Creator?

4thly, The fourth Point to be considered was, Why We are advised to remember God more particularly in the Days of our Youth.

Let Those, who have been Young, and now are Old: Those, who did comply with this Advice, and Those who did not, answer that Question.

The Former will tell You, what infinite Consolation They now feel in their Hearts from having applied Themselves early to the Study and Practice of their Duty: What Ease and Delight in the Service of God from a long Habit of

292 DISCOURSE XIV.

serving Him: What Refreshment in the Decays of Nature, and what an Antidote against the Fear of Death, from the Consciousness of having dedicated their Youth to their Maker.

On the Contrary, When that first Season of Life has been spent in Disobedience, and Ingratitude to Him, who gave it, How melancholy are the Thoughts, which accompany the last Stage; looking Backward with Shame, and Forward with Fear? When the Labour and Sorrow of a doubtful Repentance are added to the Infirmities of Age; and that Recollection of past Days, which should be the Cordial of Grey Hairs, becomes their Poison.

If you would therefore avoid such a sad Conclusion of your Journey through Life, You, who are just entering upon it,

DISCOURSE XIV. 293

it, or have made hitherto no very great Progress in it, Employ your Minds betimes in making the necessary Provisions for Futurity.

God Almighty has appointed Us a most important Commission to execute Here ; is a constant Observer of the Attention We give to it ; and will be a strict Exactor of the Performance. That Commission includes all that is called Religion, and Morality, *viz.* The Gratitude, and Love ; The Adoration, and Praise ; The Obedience, and Resignation, which We owe to God. The Numberless Duties of Justice and Charity to our Neighbour, meaning to all Mankind ; And every Instance of Abstinence, and Self-Denial, which may enable Us to govern our Passions, and subject Them to the Gospel of Christ. In these three Points consist what is termed in Scrip-

294 DISCOURSE XIV.

ture, Living *Godlyly, Righteously, and Soberly* in this present World : The First respecting our Maker.—The Second our Fellow Creatures.—And the Third Ourselves. This is the Work that is given Us to do.

Now if God had withholden from Us the Abilities necessary for our doing It ; or, if he had laid us under Injunctions inconsistent with our Present and Future Happiness, or entirely unconnected with It ; We might then have had Reason to complain of the Uneasiness of his Yoke, and Weight of his Burthen.

But This is far from being our Case ; For to say that God requires more of his Creatures than They can perform, is little less than Blasphemy : And What he does require of Them is so ordered by his Fatherly Goodness, as to be certainly

DISCOURSE XIV. 295

tainly productive of Good, both Here and Hereafter, to Those who obey his Commandments.

Neither are his Laws, in Truth, hard, and grievous, unless where Men render Them so to Themselves, by stifling the Seeds of Virtue in their own Minds, rejecting the Admonitions of uncorrupted Reason, and preferring a wretched Slavery to vitious Appetites to that *Liberty*, wherewith *Christ* would *make Them free*.

Indeed, when this unhappy Choice is made in our Youthful days; when the first Fruits of our Understanding, with the Vigour and Activity of Early Age, are dedicated to the Service of Sin and Satan, The Returning afterwards, upon maturer Thoughts, to the Paths of Virtue will be found difficult, and laborious. But Thither We

296 DISCOURSE XIV.

must return, though through all the Bitterness of Self Reproach, and the redoubled Anguish of a late Repentance, if we hope for any Blessing from Almighty God, either in this World, or in the Next.

Yet This future Torment of a Wounded Conscience is What We see a Multitude of Young People voluntarily expose Themselves to. They feel Themselves healthy and strong: They see Many about Them, that have lived to a good Old Age; and give no Attention to the much greater Numbers that fall in the Beginning, or in the Middle of their Course. They will enjoy their irregular Pleasures now, and repent of Them Hereafter: They will forget their Creator in their Youth, and remember Him in their Age. But
let

DISCOURSE XIV. 297

let them consider the Uncertainty of their ever reaching that Period, or even outliving that very Day, in which They take such a dangerous Resolution: Besides the evident Foolishness and Absurdity of Doing with a Design to Undo; and the Improbability of their being better disposed to work, when the Task is harder, and the Strength less. Let Them hear too the Words of Solomon to such early Sinners: *Rejoice, O young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer Thee in the Days of thy Youth: And Walk in the Ways of thy Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes. - But Know Thou, that for all these Things God shall bring Thee to Judgment.*

Let them reflect, likewise, upon what the Apostle says, that *God is not mocked.* He will certainly not be over-reached
by

298 DISCOURSE XIV.

by the Cunning of sinful Men, nor agree with Them to take such a Share of their Time, as They would allot to his Service; and leave the Remainder to be spent in Opposition to his Will, and Defiance of his Vengeance.

Here then may be, for what They know, a grievous Addition to the Catalogue of their other Youthful Transgressions; Even an Attempt to impose upon unerring Wisdom, and bargain with the Justice of God: In which Case their very Resolutions of future Repentance may want to be repented of, as an Aggravation of their present Sin. And Can They be sure, though they should escape Death for very many Years, and should be at last really and sincerely inclined to bewail their past Follies, and to forsake

DISCOURSE XIV. 299

fake their Wicked Ways, that their Repentance, so artfully, and impiously postponed, will then be accepted? Can They have a sufficient Security that the Pardon of God will be granted to such a deliberate Plan of Disobedience to his holy Will, and Presumption upon his Mercy.

But some there are, who plead the extraordinary Violence of Passion at that Time of Life, and would represent the Enemy, to Whom They too willingly yield Themselves Captive, as irresistible. But This is a Pretence, which, as I before observed, throws an injurious Reflexion upon the Justice of God, who cannot require of Man more than he has given him Strength to perform. Neither do young Men allege the same Kind of Excuse in other Cases. As They have, at that Age,

300 DISCOURSE XIV.

Age, a double Portion of Spirit and Vigour, a keener Appetite for Praise, and a warmer Ambition to excell; so their Sense of Disgrace is then generally more quick, and their Resolution increased by Difficulties. Let Them therefore apply to the Service of God those superior Qualifications, which are too often lavished upon base, and unworthy Pursuits: Then they may be assured of that Assistance, which he has promised. Then that Strength of Temptation, of which They now complain, will enhance the Merit of Resistance; and the Reward of Conquest be proportioned to the Danger of Defeat.

The Sum of the whole Matter is This.—God is our Creator. To remember Him is to love, honour, fear, and obey Him. The Obligation to these

DISCOURSE XIV. 301

these Duties lies equally upon every Age: But They are more particularly to be pressed upon Youth, as the best Preparation for the Happiness of their future Life; as the Way to avoid the Stings of Conscience, and the Anxieties of a late, and perhaps fruitless, Repentance; And lastly, as the Worthiest Objects, in which the Activity of those livelier Days can be employed, and such an Exertion of youthful Strength, as will doubly recommend Them to the Favour of that just and generous Being, in whose Service no Labour is ever lost.

F I N I S

28 SE60

Dis
Dis
Dis
Dis

Dis

Dis

Dis

A

E R R A T A.

- Disc. I. Page 8. lines 15 and 16. dele " " " ,
 Disc. V. p. 83. l. 4. dele *everlasting*.
 Disc. VI. p. 117. l. ult. for *pent* read *spent*.
 Disc. IX. p. 172. l. 8. for *general* read *universal*.
 Disc. XI. p. 227. l. 6 from the bottom, for
sleepeth read *slumbereth*.
 ————— p. 237. l. 2. for *with* read *of*.
 Disc. XII. p. 247. l. 4 from the bottom,
 dele *and*.
 Disc. XIII. p. 267. l. 8. for *Christians* read
Corinthians.

N. B. There are some few Errors in Punctuation, in Initial Letters, and in Italicks instead of the Common Character, but left without particular Notice here, as not altering the Sense.